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# The Educational Experiences of Female Latin American Students in Ontario: An Intersectional Analysis

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Graduate Program in Education

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Doctor of Philosophy

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## Abstract

This exploratory case study investigated the educational persistence of female Latin American students. The Canadian population with Latin American origins is one of the fastest growing and increasingly diverse peoples in the country. Despite this growth, there is a dearth of research about peoples of Latin American origins in Canada, and consequently, there is limited research about Latin American students and their educational experiences. To help address this research gap, this study engaged critical feminist theory and intersectionality to conduct a strengths-oriented investigation of female Latin American students' educational persistence. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews with post-secondary students and recent graduates revealed participants' insights about their educational experiences, within historical, social, and temporal contexts. The interconnections between social identities and institutional power interactions of privilege and oppression uncovered essential elements of participants' educational persistence. Data analysis methods employed the Multilevel Model of Intersectionality (Núñez, 2014a, 2014b) to guide iterative analysis processes.

Research findings illustrate that the female Latin American participants negotiated their dynamic, complex identities while they navigated the education system's barriers of racism and classism. Participants realized that their identities evolved through these processes of identity negotiation; for example, they navigated issues of acceptance and rejection of their own ethnic identities. Participants demonstrated academic persistence, despite challenges and barriers that included institutionalized racism and classism. They believed that their education would effect change for themselves and their families. Research findings reveal the significance of parents' influence on participants' educational persistence. Parents actively supported their daughters' education, and encouraged participants' educational efforts, persistence, and aspirations. Familism, which prioritizes family interests before individual interests, influenced family relationships and participants' educational persistence. Furthermore, for most participants, *recompensa* (acknowledgement or reward) of parents' sacrifices motivated participants' academic efforts. These findings have implications for parental engagement within the education system.

Finally, the Multilevel Model of Intersectionality facilitated understanding of participants' dynamic identities and relationships, and in particular, the significance and complexity of parental involvement with their daughters' education. This study provides insight into the application of this Model to research processes and contributes to the field of intersectionality research.

## Keywords

Latina, Latin American, Parents, Persistence, Familism, Recompensa, Intersectionality, Multilevel Model of Intersectionality, Canada, Education, Post-secondary education, Promise of education

## Acknowledgments

Although this dissertation was written in long bouts of solitude, there are many people who were involved along the way, and to you I am indebted.

- First and foremost, thank you to the study participants. Your generosity and kindness for sharing parts of your lives humble me. I am in awe of your strengths, your passion for life, your persistence. I hope this experience of sharing your voices was empowering in some way. I wish you all the best in everything that you do.
- Thank you to my husband Charlie. Although you didn't realize what this journey would entail (me either!), your unwavering faith in me is exactly the support I needed. Teamwork indeed!
- Thank you to Professor Goli Rezai-Rashti, your patience, support, and kindness seemed unending, and steadily kept guiding me in the directions I needed to go. I've grown as a researcher and as an educator from my experiences working with you.
- Thank you to Dr. Gus Riveros, for engaging me in some of your own research journeys. You challenged me to keep thinking and learning, to contribute, and to ask questions. I truly appreciate your support and guidance.
- Thank you to Douglas Campbell, for your kindness during the hours you spent guiding me to understand the nuances of effective writing.
- Thank you to my cohort peers—for long years of support and writing retreats! We arrived as strangers and departed as friends. How awesome is that!
- Finally, I appreciate financial support from Western University in the form of the *Western Graduate Research Scholarship* and the *Doctoral Excellence Research Award*, and financial support from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), for awarding me the *Joseph-Armand Bombardier Canada Graduate Scholarship–Doctoral Award*.

# Table of Contents

Abstract .....	i
Acknowledgments.....	iii
Table of Contents .....	iv
List of Tables .....	ix
List of Figures .....	x
Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study.....	1
1.1 Overview .....	1
1.2 Explanation of Key Terminology .....	2
1.3 Research Context .....	3
1.3.1 People of Latin American origins in Canada. ....	4
1.3.2 Latin American students in Canadian schools. ....	5
1.3.3 Latin American students framed as deficient.....	7
1.3.4 Academic persistence.....	8
1.4 Study Purpose .....	10
1.5 Research Questions.....	10
1.6 Research Significance .....	11
1.7 Research Rationale.....	11
1.8 Researcher Background .....	12
1.9 Conceptual Framework: Critical Feminist Intersectionality .....	13
1.9.1 Critical theory and critical research. ....	14
1.9.2 Feminist theory and feminist research. ....	16
1.9.3 Intersectionality theory and intersectionality research. ....	17
1.10Multilevel Model of Intersectionality .....	22
1.10.1 Social Identities.....	23

1.10.2 Domains of Power.....	30
1.10.3 Historicity. ....	33
1.11 Dissertation Organization .....	33
Chapter 2: Literature Review .....	35
2.1 Overview .....	35
2.2 Organizational Influences on Education Experiences.....	36
2.3 Intersubjective Influences on Education Experiences.....	38
2.3.1 Educators influence education experiences: Racism and sexism. ....	38
2.3.2 Parents influence education experiences: Support and familism.....	43
2.3.3 Peers influence education experiences: Creating boundaries. ....	47
2.4 Strategies of Navigation and Persistence .....	53
2.4.1 Assimilation into the dominant culture.....	54
2.4.2 Resistance for educational persistence.....	57
2.5 Summary .....	63
Chapter 3: Methodology and Methods .....	65
3.1 Overview .....	65
3.2 Qualitative Case Study .....	66
3.3 Research Design.....	68
3.3.1 Data collection methods.....	68
3.3.2 Recruitment procedures. ....	71
3.4 Data Analysis .....	72
3.4.1 Transcription. ....	73
3.4.2 Data interpretation. ....	74
3.5 Introduction to Participants .....	80
3.5.1 Participants' background details. ....	80
3.5.2 Participants' profiles. ....	85

3.6 Ethical Considerations .....	94
3.6.1 Informed voluntary consent. ....	94
3.6.2 Confidentiality. ....	95
3.7 Issues of Trustworthiness and Limitations.....	96
3.7.1 Trustworthiness.....	96
3.7.2 Limitations. ....	97
3.8 Summary .....	99
Chapter 4: History and Context: “ <i>No desde aquí, no desde allí</i> . Not from here, not from there.” (Elvia).....	100
4.1 Introduction .....	100
4.2 Immigration Contexts .....	101
4.3 Education Contexts .....	103
4.3.1 Participants’ post-secondary education contexts. ....	103
4.3.2 The context of parents’ education attainment. ....	104
4.4 Family Contexts .....	105
4.4.1 Family composition. ....	106
4.4.2 Family relationships.....	106
4.4.3 Family, education, and gender. ....	109
4.5 Identity Contexts .....	113
4.5.1 Ethnic identity.....	113
4.5.2 Identity and Spanish language fluency. ....	118
4.5.3 Intersections of ethnic and racial identity. ....	121
4.6 Summary .....	126
Chapter 5: Negotiating Institutional Dynamics that Privilege Some Students and Not Others .....	127
5.1 Introduction .....	127

5.2 Negotiating the costs of post-secondary education: “If you don’t have to worry about money, then you can be academically privileged.” (Valentina) .....	127
5.3 Negotiating Institutionalized Racism: “The colour of your skin dictates where you end up.” (Elena) .....	134
5.3.1 Privilege and segregation. ....	135
5.3.2 Isolation and the predominance of white people. ....	143
5.3.3 Negotiated identities and negotiated relationships .....	152
5.4 Negotiating Education Transitions: “Understanding the system was a challenge” (Liliana).....	161
5.5 Summary .....	165
Chapter 6: Educational Persistence: Belief in the Promise of Education .....	166
6.1 Introduction .....	166
6.2 Education Expectations: Reliance on Education.....	167
6.2.1 Parents’ education expectations: “Education on a pedestal.” (Elena) .....	167
6.2.2 Participants’ education expectations: “Everything will work out.” (Samara) .....	172
6.3 Educational Persistence: Motivation.....	174
6.3.1 Financial motivators.....	174
6.3.2 Academic motivators. ....	177
6.3.3 Parents as motivators: <i>Recompensa</i> . ....	182
6.4 Persistence, Despite the Challenges: “I pushed through it. It was hard.” (Mayra) .....	187
6.5 Summary .....	190
Chapter 7: Educational Persistence: “Everything that happens, has a light at the end of the tunnel” (Elena) .....	191
7.1 Introduction .....	191
7.2 Summary of Findings.....	192
7.3 The Multilevel Model of Intersectionality .....	193
7.4 Research Contributions .....	197



7.5 Research Limitations.....	197
7.6 Recommendations: Educational Practices .....	200
7.7 Suggestions: Future Research .....	203
7.8 Last Words .....	205
References.....	207
Appendices.....	242
Appendix A: Latin American Identity .....	242
Appendix B: Interview Guide .....	245
Appendix C: Recruitment Poster .....	247
Appendix D: Ethics Approval.....	248
Appendix E: Letter of Information and Consent.....	249
Curriculum Vitae .....	254

## List of Tables

Table 3.1 Participants' Background Information.....	80
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## List of Figures

Figure 1.1 Multilevel model of intersectionality (Núñez, 2014a, 2014b). .....	24
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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

I think I underestimate how *determined* I am to do something. And, how *dedicated* I can be, for school. Honestly, this is the first year that I'm actually *enjoying* it. But, I've stuck through 5 years of it. It's been kind of hell. And I'm still here. (Valentina)

### 1.1 Overview

This exploratory case study investigates the educational persistence of Canadian, female Latin American students such as Valentina. The Canadian population with Latin American origins is one of the fastest growing and increasingly diverse peoples in the country. Despite this growth, there is a dearth of research about peoples of Latin American origins in Canada, and consequently, limited research about Latin American students and their experiences. To help address this research gap, this study engaged critical feminist theory and intersectionality to conduct a strengths-oriented investigation of female Latin American students' educational persistence.

Semi-structured, in-depth interviews with post-secondary students and recent graduates such as Valentina revealed participants' insights about their educational experiences within historical, social, and temporal contexts. The interconnections between social identities and institutional power dynamics of privilege and oppression illuminated essential elements of participants' educational persistence. Data analysis methods employed the Multilevel Model of Intersectionality (Núñez, 2014a; 2014b) to guide iterative analysis processes. These processes revealed influences on participants' education, their opportunities and challenges within the system, the negotiation of their identities in the context of institutional and interpersonal marginalization, and their persistence like Valentina's, that maintained their belief in the promise of education. This first chapter outlines the research context, introduces the study, and finishes with a detailed discussion about the critical feminist intersectional framework and the Model that guided this study.

## 1.2 Explanation of Key Terminology

Before proceeding further, it is important to explain the use of key terminology, beginning with the term *Latin American*. The peoples who immigrate to Canada from the vast region that includes Mexico, Central and South America, and Spanish-speaking areas of the Caribbean are complexly heterogeneous, with diverse histories, geographies, dialects, phenotype, ethnicities, social classes, and nationalities. There is no one term to represent such diversity, however, the term Latin American in this study includes peoples of Latin American origins or Latin American descent; those who have immigrated to Canada from the Latin American regions or who were born in Canada to families with Latin American origins. Although Latin American—similar to terms such as *Chicano*, *Hispanic*, *Latina/o*, and *Latinx*—implies homogenous, static identities where none exist, the intent is not to create or imply essentialized, homogenized identities or stereotypes. Therefore, Latin American is used with care, while other terms are engaged when relevant to the participants. Importantly, the term Latin American does not preclude Canadian identity. Instead, it is assumed that identity is complex; Latin American identity is one aspect of participant identity that may include Canadian identity. Participants self-identified themselves with multiple terms. (see Chapter 4). For a more detailed discussion of these considerations, see Appendix A. Additionally, the dynamic complexities of participants' identities are addressed in Chapters 4 and 5.

*Immigrant* is another term engaged here, that requires clarification. The use of the term immigrant is influenced by how the term is applied and interpreted. According to Statistics Canada, immigrant refers to those who are or have been landed immigrants and have been granted the right to live in Canada permanently (<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/concepts/index>). Immigrants may or may not be Canadian citizens, and most are born outside of Canada. This implies that a person may remain a lifelong immigrant, and children born in Canada to immigrants are not immigrants. However, immigrant identity may not be limited by these parameters. For example, in her study of immigrant women entering the Canadian workforce, Ng (1996) argues that women who had migrated to Canada were “produced” as immigrant women, since the term immigrant was not applied to white, middle class women. Instead, Ng (1996)

concludes that socially constructed intersections of gendered, classed, and racialized identities in common sense terms identify the process of becoming someone with immigrant origins, who is low-skilled, poor, and racialized. Thus, people may be interpreted as immigrants regardless of their immigration classification, status, or citizenship. In this study, participants are members of immigrant families.

*Generation* adds complexity to the interpretation of immigrant identity and to the identity of children of immigrants. Anthias (2009) cautions that the term generation frames these children in a binary between their parents' homeland and their country of residence, which ignores the complexities of transnational identities. Children of immigrants are influenced by diverse relationships between their country of residence, their parents' homeland, and the temporal and spatial trajectories of family migration (Anthias, 2009). Although Statistics Canada defines the second generation as those born in Canada to immigrant parents (<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/concepts/index>), this definition does not account for similarities between the experiences of children born in Canada to immigrant parents, and the experiences of immigrant children who arrive in Canada as youngsters and have been fully educated in Canada (Jantzen, 2006). Childhood immigrants are those who were 17 years or younger at the time of immigration (Hou & Bonikowska, 2016). Thus, generation implies a simplicity that masks heterogeneous complexity. Participants in this study are second generation daughters of immigrants, defined as "a demographic group that includes both children born in Canada to immigrant parents and those (often referred to as the 1.5 generation) who immigrated to Canada as children" (Kobayashi, 2006).

### 1.3 Research Context

This study investigated education experiences from the perspectives of Canadian women of Latin American origins, who were current or recent post-secondary students. There is limited research about Latin American students who reach system-determined markers of educational achievement such as high school completion and post-secondary enrollment (Gándara, 2013). Instead, much of the research that does study Latin American students frames them with a deficit construct (Bernhard, 2012; Colón, & Sánchez, 2010; Venzant Chambers, Lock, & Tagarao, 2015) that focuses on underperformance (Venzant

Chambers, Lock, & Tagarao, 2015) and emphasizes issues of school dropout and under-achievement. Furthermore, Latin American students are marginalized (Barajas & Pierce, 2001) and encounter low expectations about their academic potential (Cavazos & Cavazos, 2010). However, there is little research about Latin American students who persist despite such challenges. Moreover, there is limited research about the experiences of Latin American students in the Canadian education system. What research there is available about Latin American students does not prioritize the education experiences of female Latin American students. The following discussion demonstrates that since there is an expanding Latin American population in Canada, the absence of research that examines the Canadian education progress of female Latin American students creates a research gap.

### 1.3.1 People of Latin American origins in Canada.

In Canada, the population of peoples with Latin American origins is one of the fastest growing populations of immigrant peoples (Armony, 2014). Additionally, Spanish is one of the more commonly spoken “immigrant languages” (Statistics Canada, 2016). Migration from the Latin American region to Canada began to increase in the 1960s following changes in Canada’s immigration laws (Durand & Massey, 2010). Multiple waves of Latin American immigrants arrived in Canada (Veronis, 2010), distinguished by the political and socio-economic factors of their countries of origin (Durand & Massey, 2010; Ginieniewicz, & McKenzie, 2014; Veronis, 2010). Consider that in 2012, 70% of Latin American immigrants arrived as economic migrants and were likely to be urban, middle class, and “possibly of non-indigenous or non-African descent (as opposed to a rural, indigenous or Black background)” of earlier migrants (Armony, 2014, p. 29). In 2016 there were almost 675,000 people in Canada who identified as having Latin, Central, or South American origins—1.9% of Canada’s population (Statistics Canada, 2016). Moreover, approximately 12% of immigrants arrive from Central and South America and the Spanish speaking Caribbean annually (Statistics Canada, 2013), while about 2.2% of the Spanish-speaking immigrants to Canada arrive through the U.S. (Shihadeh, Trovato, & Barranco, 2013). Approximately 58% of the peoples with Latin, Central, or South American origins are first generation, those born outside of Canada

(Statistics Canada, 2016). About 75% of Spanish speakers lived in Ontario and Quebec (Statistics Canada, 2013), and almost half of the Latin American immigrants to Canada between 2003 and 2012 were from Colombia and Mexico (Statistics Canada, 2013). These data illustrate some of the diversity of Latin American peoples in Canada.

### 1.3.2 Latin American students in Canadian schools.

Even with the Latin American population growth, there is limited Canadian research about the experiences of peoples of Latin American origins in Canada (Armony, 2014; Houbt, 2011; Shihadeh et al., 2013), and in particular, about the education experiences of students of Latin American origins in the Canadian education system (Gaztambide-Fernández & Guerrero, 2011; Guerrero, 2014). Furthermore, there is limited current scholarship that analyses Latin American students' educational well being. Instead, research demonstrates that generally when compared with their peers, Latin American students have not achieved as well on system-determined benchmarks of academic achievement, which include high school completion and post-secondary education (PSE) participation. The majority of these findings come from the Toronto District School Board (TDSB), the first Canadian school board to examine academic achievement according to students' self-reported ethno-linguistic background (Gaztambide-Fernández & Guerrero, 2011; Guerrero, 2014). These TDSB data are compiled from five-year cohort studies beginning each year from 2000-2008; the 2011/2012 TDSB Student Census of 103,000 grade 7-12 students; the TDSB Parent Census of 90,000 K-6 parents; and the TDSB academic achievement databases. Approximately 2% of the TDSB student population, 5,000 students, have "Latin@/Hispanic" roots (<http://www.tdsb.on.ca/research>). Sixty-four percent of these students were Canadian-born, and two thirds spoke Spanish at home (<http://www.tdsb.on.ca/research>). The TDSB data findings present a starting point from which to understand the education experiences of Latin American students in Canada.

The TDSB examined five-year high school completion and attrition rates (Brown, 2006). Findings for 2000-2005, the first cohort studied, indicate that while 23% of all students did not complete high school by Year 5, almost 40% of the self-identified Latin American students did not finish in five years (Brown, 2006). The TDSB continues to



focus efforts to improve academic results for specific target groups, one of which is Spanish speaking students (Brown, Newton, & Tam, 2015). Throughout, the TDSB focus has prioritized students who did not or do not meet systemic expectations for high school completion within five years, rather than the 60% of Latin American students who completed high school (Brown, 2006). External, follow-up research investigated school factors that contributed to the TDSB findings (Brown, 2006) and identified influences on the 40% that included stereotypes and discrimination, language and cultural differences, and harmful social interactions and relationships with school staff (see Gatto, Daly, & Buttu, 2013; Gaztambide-Fernández & Guerrero, 2011; Schugurensky, Mantilla, & Serrano, 2009).

Another system-determined measure of student achievement is PSE participation. The TDSB's PSE pathway data from Ontario's university and college application records identify students who *confirmed attendance*, *applied but had no record of acceptance*, or *did not apply to PSE* (<http://www.tdsb.on.ca/research>). According to the findings, Latin American students had the lowest university confirmation rates, and the highest did not apply rates when compared to other TDSB race/ethnicity groups (<http://www.tdsb.on.ca/research>). Furthermore, Spanish speakers had the lowest, post-secondary confirmation rates, and the highest did not apply rates when compared to other language groups. The TDSB also reported that Latin American parents were less likely to expect their children to attend university and more likely to expect them to attend college, when compared to TDSB parents overall (Yau, Rosolen, & Archer, 2015). Considered together, these findings suggest that Latin American students completed high school and attended PSE at lower or slower rates than many of their peers (Abada, Hou, & Ram, 2009). Evidently, research about the academic progress of Latin American students is deficit-focused, since it prioritizes student results that are below expectations, and seems to overlook student results that meet or exceed system-determined benchmarks of progress.

***Latin American girls' education.*** While the TDSB examined data according to gender, and also self-reported ethno-linguistic background, the TDSB did not report intersectional findings about Latin American students by gender. Additionally, although

the TDSB findings (Brown, 2006) initiated further qualitative research about Latin American students (see for example, Gatto, Daly, & Buttu, 2013; Gaztambide-Fernández & Guerrero, 2011; Schugurensky et al., 2009), these studies included minimal gender analysis. Guerrero's (2014) study with Latin American youth in Toronto is the exception. Guerrero (2014) found that girls problematized their gendered identity—identity complicated by media-influenced stereotypes and normative cultural frameworks. However, the study did not include analysis of gender within the context of systemic inequities in education. Apparently, while gendered education experiences are the focus of some U.S. research (see for example Colón & Sánchez, 2010; Gándara, 2013; Garcia, 2009; Lopez, 2003), Latin American students in Canada are under-researched at a time when the population of peoples of Latin American origins is dynamically changing and increasing. As such, there is a gap in the research about female Latin American students in the context of education, which this study begins to address.

### 1.3.3 Latin American students framed as deficient.

Strength-focused research highlights academic achievement, while deficit-focused research prioritizes academic failure. The research discussed above identifies system-determined benchmarks of education achievement and failure, and highlights the low achievement by Latin American students, such as the almost 40% of Latin American students who did not complete high school by Year 5 (Brown, 2006). Noticeably missing from research findings such as the Brown study (2006) is examination of the 60% of Latin American students who *did* complete high school as expected. Without that data, understanding of Latin American students' educational experiences is limited only to those who did not meet system-determined benchmarks of educational progress. When research about Latin American students prioritizes under-achievement such as early school leaving (Colón, & Sánchez, 2010), knowledge about Latin American students' educational experiences is limited to understanding system-determined measures of academic failure, which restricts understanding of Latin American students' academic achievement. Such limits risk essentializing deficit concepts of Latin American young people (Bernhard, 2010; Colón, & Sánchez, 2010; Valencia, 2010; Venzant Chambers,

Lock, & Tagarao, 2015). For example, essentialized deficit concepts of Latin American students hinder academic progress (Valenzuela, 1999).

Furthermore, strengths-oriented research that prioritizes the achievement-focused educational experiences of Latin American students, such as those who meet or exceed education expectations (Harris & Kiyama, 2015; Ovink, 2014; Venzant Chambers et al., 2015), diversifies perspectives about Latin American students. For example, understanding high achievers diversifies the insight into the factors that influence academic progress, including factors that may impact under-achieving students. Understanding gleaned from high achievers' experiences to overcome educational challenges may contribute valuable insight into understanding the challenges and needs of under-achieving students. As Anyon (2009) argues, "one cannot understand or explain x by merely describing x. One must look exogenously at non-x—particularly the context and social forces in which the object of study is embedded" (p. 2). Factors that influence Latin American student high achievement (non-x) provide insight into the factors that may address low achievement (x) challenges and needs. Therefore, understanding factors that influence high achievement informs efforts to build on the strengths of low achievers, which is a strengths-oriented perspective, instead of the deficit perspective of seeking to lessen the deficiencies of low achievers. Consequently, research about Latin American students must include consideration of students' strengths and achievements rather than only their weaknesses and failures. Complex perspectives require diversity in understanding of Latin American students' educational experiences and educational needs.

#### 1.3.4 Academic persistence.

The focus of this study is to understand the experiences of those who persist in school despite the barriers they may encounter, and to identify the factors that support their persistence. Barriers include racism (Abada, Hou, & Ram, 2009; Mroczkowski & Sánchez, 2015), educators' expectations (Cooper Stoll, 2013; Guerrero, 2014), and marginalization by peers (Bettie, 2014; Conchas, 2006; Fergus, 2009). This attention to academic persistence provides a strength-oriented focus for the examination of female Latin American students' Canadian educational experiences. Persistence involves

“striving in the face of adversity and challenging situations” (Butler-Barnes, Chavous, Hurd, & Varner, 2013, p. 1447). Factors that have been found to influence persistence include social support (Harris & Kiyama, 2015; Jackson, Smith, & Hill, 2003; Veal et al., 2012) and self-efficacy (Bordes-Edgar, Arredondo, Robinson Kurpius, & Rund, 2011; Butler-Barnes et al., 2013). Academic persistence is measured by grade retention and high school completion (Harris & Kiyama, 2015), and PSE retention and completion (Veal, Bull, & Fitzgerald Miller, 2012). Additionally, high school high grade point average (GPA) has been linked to PSE persistence (see Dooley, Payne, & Robb, 2012 for their study of Ontario PSE students, and for their study of Latin American students see Bordes-Edgar et al., 2011; Cerna, Pérez, & Sáenz, 2009). As such, the inclusion of academic persistence in this study ensures a strengths-oriented emphasis.

Students’ experiences with racism may provide significant challenges to academic persistence (see Butler-Barnes et al., 2013; Harris & Kiyama, 2015; Jackson et al., 2003; Veal et al., 2012). For example, racial discrimination influences poor academic performance by Latin American students (Mroczkowski & Sánchez, 2015; Stein, Gonzalez, Cupito, Kiang, & Supple, 2015). Anxiety about racial discrimination at school hindered Latin American students’ academic motivation (Perreira et al., 2010), and correlated with poor academic performance and educational attainment (Mroczkowski & Sánchez, 2015). Thus, racism is but one challenge to Latin American students’ persistence. Conversely, race and racism are also factors of persistence. In their investigation of the academic persistence of African American high school students and the protective role of strength-based assets against racial discrimination, Butler-Barnes et al. (2013) identify assets that facilitated academic persistence, which included racial pride, self-efficacy beliefs, and self-acceptance. Students drew from personal and cultural assets to protect against the negative effects of racial discrimination on their academic persistence. Evidently, while racial discrimination provides a barrier to academic progress, racial pride can be a protective factor of academic persistence. Furthermore, the inclusion of an asset-informed emphasis on students’ strengths prioritizes students’ persistence despite the barriers they experience.

This study's research gap dwells in the need for strengths-oriented research about Latin American students in general, and female Latin American students specifically, in the context of a growing and diversifying population of Latin American peoples in Canada. Current research about Latin American students, including Canadian research, prioritizes students' inabilities to achieve system-mandated benchmarks. This study instead offers a strengths-oriented emphasis on the experiences of female Latin American students, who persist in Canadian education despite the barriers that they may encounter.

## 1.4 Study Purpose

The purposes of this qualitative, critical feminist case study were threefold. The first purpose was to gain insight into the Canadian education experiences of female Latin American students. Second, the purpose was to pursue understanding about participants' persistence within the education system as they sought to achieve personal and system-determined benchmarks of educational performance, such as high school completion and post-secondary education participation. The third purpose was to engage a recently developed Multilevel Model of Intersectionality (Núñez, 2014a, 2014b) to examine the interconnections of participants' social identities within "societal processes and organizational practices" (Núñez, 2014a, p. 52), and to understand the Model's effectiveness in facilitating that examination. The Model is described in detail, later in this chapter.

## 1.5 Research Questions

The overarching research question that guides this study is, *How do female Latin American students persist in the Canadian education system?* This question rests on the assumption that female Latin American students educationally persist. Several additional assumptions frame this question. First, this research centres the perceptions, understandings, and experiences of the research participants. Second, social identities interconnect with institutional power dynamics of privilege and oppression. Third, educational experiences are contextualized within historical, social, and temporal factors. Consequently, the secondary questions that guide this study are as follows:

- How do they negotiate their social identities?

- What are their perceptions of and experiences with the opportunities and challenges found in the Canadian education system?
- What are the historical, temporal, and social contexts that influence their educational aspirations?

## 1.6 Research Significance

This research is significant since it contributes to three areas of scholarship. First, this study enriches Canadian scholarship about how students from immigrant families experience education in the Canadian education system. The knowledge produced by this study strengthens and diversifies the growing body of research about the Canadian education experiences of students of Latin American origin in general and contributes to the literature about the persistence of female Latin American students specifically. Additionally, findings from this study could inform the endeavours of education system practitioners, policy makers, and researchers. Second, this research contributes knowledge about the Canadian experiences of Latin American students, to a field of research that is dominated by U.S. research. Third, this study employed a complex Model of intersectionality to conceptualize and analyze experiences, which informs feminist intersectionality research practices.

## 1.7 Research Rationale

This research inquiry addresses a research gap. More research about Latin American peoples in Canada offers greater understanding, without homogenizing Latin American diversity (Armony, 2014). Despite the body of research about Latin American students in the U.S., the education of Latin Americans is “woefully” under-researched, and specifically the education of Latin American girls (Gándara, 2015), or women in higher education (Reigle-Crumb, 2010; Sy & Romero, 2008). Furthermore, qualitative, in-depth scholarship that considers the persistence of Latin American students rather than merely Latin American students’ deficiencies and underachievement would expand understanding of Latin American students’ educational experiences (Colón, & Sánchez, 2010; Gándara, 2015; Venzant Chambers et al., 2015). Feminist intersectional research approaches address the complexities of Latin American identity and experiences

(Alemán, 2018), particularly in the study of female Latin American students (Valdivia, 2010), for intersectionality allows for in-depth analysis of dynamic Latin American identities in the context of power relationships (Núñez, 2014a). Additionally, intersectionality accommodates the exploration of historical and social contexts for young people (Galambos & Leadbeater, 2000; Suárez-Orozco, 2007). Finally, intersectionality provides a valuable, “emerging field of work with considerable untapped potential” (Alemán, 2018, p. 198), to the study of Latin Americans’ education experiences. This study that examines Latin American women’s persistence in the Canadian education system addresses contemporary research needs, some of which are identified here.

## 1.8 Researcher Background

As a second-generation Canadian educator who enjoys learning about immigrants’ journeys, transitions, and integrations into the Canadian narrative, I am particularly curious about education experiences. Complex locations of class, gender, and transnationality positioned me as Other during my Canadian education experiences, despite my location as a white, middle-class, female member of Canada’s dominant culture. It was not until I experienced the challenges of immigration myself during adulthood that I came to realize my privileged position. In my career as a teacher, I had job security, guaranteed income, and status, while as an immigrant, I was first employed in temporary, labour-intensive, entry-level positions with no benefits, responsibilities, or status. Accordingly, I situate myself as someone with a high degree of privilege, although that privilege has fluctuated throughout my life.

Furthermore, in this study I hold an outsider position for several reasons—race, ethnicity, age, and class privilege among others—yet I have some insider connections since I too am a daughter of immigrants who has experienced the historical, social, and temporal influences of transnationality. Insider researchers offer insight into participants’ experiences that outsiders such as myself may not see nor understand due to differences that here include racial, ethnic, language, cultural, class, gender, and historical differences among others, between me and participants. Conversely, outsider researchers may introduce a “fresh interpretive perspective” (Suárez-Orozco, 2007). However, my position as a white privileged researcher in this study of racialized women is not one of

comfort or ease, for my position influences my understanding of participants' experiences (Vetter, Fairbanks, & Ariail, 2011). Throughout, I sought to remain wary of this position, since I do not speak for these women, but instead I share their words spoken to me, and facilitate understanding of their words and experiences.

Others ask about my interest in the experiences of Latin American students, particularly since I am not Latin American. From my work with young people in New Jersey, I learned about the oppression of Latin American people in the United States, oppression which pervades systems such as education, justice, and employment. Furthermore, xenophobic rhetoric permeated public discourse amidst government attempts to implement the DREAM Act—the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors. In its various forms, the intent of DREAM legislation was to establish legal status for young people who had entered the U.S. without legal status when they were children. Pervasive within the rhetoric was a deficit construct of Latin American young people (Colón, & Sánchez, 2010; Venzant Chambers, Lock, & Tagarao, 2015), who are marginalized (Barajas & Pierce, 2001) by low expectations (Cavazos & Cavazos (2010). Since I believe it is essential for every one of us to take responsibility to enact change that creates an education system that does not marginalize and oppress, I endeavoured to include Latin American young people through my work in youth development programming in New Jersey. I carried the insight gained from those experiences back with me when I returned to Canada, where they influence my ongoing research interests.

## 1.9 Conceptual Framework: Critical Feminist Intersectionality

This research study draws on a critical feminist (Dill & Zambrana, 2009; Mohanty, 2003; Olesen, 2011; Weiner, 1994) position and engages a Multilevel Model of Intersectionality (Núñez, 2014a, 2014b) to conceptualize the Canadian educational experiences of the women of Latin American origins who participated in this study. This framework enabled me to examine the complexities of their experiences; to prioritize significant facets of participants' identities that include gender, race/ethnicity, transnationality, and class locations; and to contextualize their social processes and power relations. Discussion of this framework begins with an overview of the theory, values,



and purposes of critical theory and critical research (Anyon, 2009; Carspecken, 1996; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Next, significant elements of feminist theory and research (Jaggar, 2014; Letherby, 2003; Hesse-Biber, 2012) are reviewed. Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991; Dill & Zambrana, 2009; Hancock, 2016; Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016; hooks, 2000; May, 2015) follows, including its primary purposes and processes, intersectionality research assumptions (Hancock, 2007a), and intersectionality approaches (McCall, 2005). Finally, the Multilevel Model of Intersectionality (Núñez, 2014a, 2014b) which frames this research is examined in detail.

### 1.9.1 Critical theory and critical research.

Critical theory forms the theoretical foundation of this study. According to critical theory, reality is socially constructed and shaped by ever-changing historical, cultural, spatial, and temporal contexts (Carspecken, 2001; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Kincheloe, McLaren, & Steinberg, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 2000). Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba (2011) explain that, “critical theorists tend to locate the foundations of truth in specific historical, economic, racial, gendered, and social infrastructures of oppression, injustice, and marginalization” (p. 119). Critical theory prioritizes multifaceted aspects of identity (Anyon, 1981; Crenshaw, 1991; hooks, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Lincoln et al., 2011) such as race, gender, and class, and the consequential relations of power (Crenshaw, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Núñez, 2014a) such as racism, sexism, and classism. Accordingly, critical research focuses on individuals’ experiences. For example, this study uncovers the complexities of racial and ethnic identity intersections as interpreted by the participants. Furthermore, within critical interpretive frameworks, “reality is based on power and identity struggles [and] privilege or oppression based on race or ethnicity, class, [and] gender” (Creswell, 2013, p. 37). Oppressive power structures define individual experiences that filter and create meaning.

Inherent to critical research is a transformative agenda (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011; Creswell, 2013) arising from values-driven interrogations of oppressions and social injustices (Carspecken, 1996; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Kincheloe et al., 2011; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Lincoln et al., 2011). Critical research is a values-driven approach that seeks emancipation from oppressive structures. Indeed, perhaps one of the most

significant elements of critical theory and critical research is the values factor (Agger, 2013; Carspecken, 1996; Ponterotto, 2005), which distinguishes critical theory from other paradigms (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The values-based bias is evident in the search for social justice through critical research. Social justice includes valuing democracy, equality, and human empowerment, and challenging capitalist and patriarchal values, assumptions, and social systems (Carspecken, 1996; 2001; Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Critical research is political action that confronts injustices (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011; Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994; Kincheloe, McLaren, & Steinberg, 2011; Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). This “transformative agenda, [is] concerned to move from oppression and inequality in society to the bringing about of social justice, equity and equality” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011, p. 32); an agenda that fights for a just society through research that challenges injustices such as social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender injustices. As such, this research study has an agenda, which is to challenge injustices that Latin American students experience within the education system, injustices such as classism and racism, by exposing injustices and demonstrating how students persist in this system. Critical research challenges dominant/privileged group ideologies and draws knowledge from the margins, from those who traditionally have not been heard (Ladson-Billings, 2000). Additionally, critical research recognizes non-traditional ways of knowing and challenges historical-social constructions of power relations. Thus, critical research about the experiences of those marginalized in the education system draws knowledge from those who are not often heard, the students.

Critical research transcends disciplines; as Anyon (2009) argues, critical social research includes “various types of scholarship that critique domination and subordination, promote emancipatory interests, and combine social and cultural analysis with interpretation, critique, and social explanation” (p. 2). Thus, there is no one particular approach to critical research. Instead, the desired outcomes and influences determine the research approach, that is, transformation and social justice with the specific participants and audience. Critical research approaches such as critical race theory and feminism focus on identity and power relations that oppress and marginalize (Agger, 2013;

Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Merriam, 2009). Critical researchers then, have the responsibility to examine, identify, and reveal oppression that intertwines with identity (Agger, 2013; Carspecken, 1996), for “oppression has many faces and that focusing on one at the expense of others often elides the interconnection among them” (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994, p. 139-40). The most important aspect of critical research is the impact on the marginalized (Honneth, 2004). Indeed, Creswell (2013) explains that critical theorists “are concerned with empowering human beings to transcend the constraints placed on them by race, class, and gender” (p. 30). Therefore, critical research requires a researcher who is fully cognizant of her purposes and responsibilities in the research process.

### 1.9.2 Feminist theory and feminist research.

A form of critical theory, feminism (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) centres gender; challenges power, oppression, and inequity; seeks inclusivity; recognizes diversity; and values lived experience (Hesse-Biber, 2012). Feminist theory prioritizes identity locations beyond gender that include race/ethnicity and class, and challenges oppressions and inequities (Hesse-Biber, 2012; Kohli & Burbules, 2012; Mohanty, 2003; Olesen, 2011). Mohanty (2003) argues, “to define feminism purely in gendered terms assumes that our consciousness of being ‘women’ has nothing to do with race, class, nation, or sexuality, just with gender” (p. 55). Through this critical perspective, feminist research centres gender (Lather, 1991) and applies gender as a category of analysis (Hesse-Biber, 2012; Olesen, 2011). Thus, women’s knowledge and experiences contribute a primary source of knowledge (Hesse-Biber, 2012; Hill-Collins, 2000). Consequently, feminist research examines injustices and inequities from the perspectives and experiences of those who are marginalized (Hesse-Biber, 2012; Hill-Collins, 2000), and produces knowledge that can be activated for social change (Hesse-Biber, 2012; Jaggar, 2014; Letherby, 2003; Mohanty, 2003). Feminist research centres those in the margins (Olesen, 2011) and prioritizes issues of gender, race, ethnicity, and class (Hesse-Biber, 2012).

Intersectionality is one framework theorized within critical feminism. In this research study, the critical feminist perspective prioritizes intersections of race/ethnicity, gender, and class and contextualizes historical, social, temporal, and transnational aspects.

### 1.9.3 Intersectionality theory and intersectionality research.

With the capacity to address multiple social locations and interrelations of power and oppression, intersectionality research is a viable alternative to traditional research whereby inequalities are analysed independently from each other (Dill & Zambrana, 2009). Consequently, intersectionality has become significant to feminist theory and research (Olesen, 2011; Tomlinson, 2013). For example, McCall (2005) considers intersectionality *the* most important theoretical contribution made by feminist scholarship and Davis (2008) defines intersectionality as feminism's "success story". As Davis (2008) concludes, "intersectionality offers a new *raison d'être* for doing feminist theory and analysis" (p. 72). Block and Corona (2014) contend that intersectionality provides the opportunity for "nuanced understanding" of immigrant youth and education. They argue that intersectionality is a "far better way to capture the intricacies of twenty first-century migrant identities" (p. 39), demonstrating the capacity of intersectionality to address experience in such contexts. In this study, critical feminist intersectionality framed the investigation of the educational persistence of female Latin American students, which revealed the complexities of their experiences.

Intersectionality is the vehicle for "understanding and explaining the lives and experiences of marginalized people" (Dill & Zambrana, 2009, p. 3). Thus, intersectionality is important to theorizing inequality (Anthias, 2005). As May (2014) concludes, intersectionality "entails thinking about social reality as multidimensional, lived identities as intertwined, and systems of oppression as meshed and mutually constitutive" (p. 96). However, it is essential to remember that intersectionality addresses social stratification; it is not limited to inequalities and subordinations, and includes contradictory locations and dominations (Anthias, 2012a; Yuval-Davis, 2011a, 2011b). As Yuval-Davis (2011a) argues, "the boundaries of intersectional analysis should encompass all members of society and thus intersectionality should be seen as the right theoretical framework for analysing social stratification" (p. 159), which includes the privileged as well as the oppressed. For example, a Black man may be in a dominant position in gendered contexts, and in a subordinate position in racialized contexts. Thus, contradictory locations can include both subordinate and privileged identities (Anthias,

2012b; Calliste & Dei 2000). Intersectionality must include privilege as well as oppression, in order to encompass the full spectra of identity power relationships.

The concept of “intersectionality-like thinking” (Hancock, 2016) has long been called upon by feminist activists and scholars to challenge complex oppressions derived from intersections of identities. For example, early African American feminists such as Sojourner Truth (Brah & Phoenix, 2004) and Anna Julia Cooper (May, 2015) sought transformative change through their social activism against integrated systems of oppressions. Feminist activists/scholars such as the women of the Combahee River Collective (Combahee River Collective, 1977; Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016) and Mexican American feminists such as Anzaldúa (Anzaldúa, 1987) among others, followed. The intersectionality metaphor itself originated with Kimberlé Crenshaw’s (1991) challenge to social structures, specifically U.S. laws, which prioritized *either* race *or* gender (Brah & Phoenix, 2004; Davis, 2008; Hill Collins, 2009; Knapp, 2005; Shields, 2008). Crenshaw posited that multiple aspects of identity and concurrent power relations and oppressions intersect, and she argued for an intersectional framework to incorporate the interrelations of multiple dimensions of identity with power oppressions (Crenshaw, 1991; Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016).

Meanwhile, Crenshaw’s contemporaries also advanced intersectionality-like thinking. For example, Patricia Hill Collins (1990, 2000) developed a “matrix of domination”, which centred race and incorporated gender and class analyses in her examination of power and privilege from the standpoint of African American women working in service positions. In Canada, Didi Khayatt (1994) maintained that, “gender, race, class, sexuality have to be considered together and at the same time” (p. 13), while Roxana Ng (2005) identified the gender, race, ethnicity, and class dynamics that “underpin” Canada’s development as a nation. Ng (2005) argued, “ethnicity and gender *are* the essential constituents in the formation of the Canadian class structure” (p. 10, emphasis original). Although the term intersectionality itself emerged as an element of third wave feminism, these examples illustrate the pervasiveness of intersectionality-like theorizing and engagement.

Feminist scholars engage with intersectionality to theorize, analyse, and expose oppressions. Intersectionality applies a critical lens to questions about justice, power, and institutions (Hancock, 2007a), to expose oppressions such as sexism, racism, and classism. It is the analyses of structures and the challenges to inequalities and oppressions that motivate social justice transformations (Bilge, 2013; Davis, 2008; Dill & Zambrana, 2009; Hill Collins, 2009; May, 2014; Olesen, 2011; Tomlinson, 2013). Such challenges to power seek a “less divisive and more participatory and inclusive society” (Anthias, 2013b, p. 335). Thus, the engagement of intersectionality is a political act in the pursuit of transformation. Feminist researchers employ intersectionality from “their belief in its radical potential to alter social practices—to free individuals and social groups from the normative fix of a hegemonic order and to enable a politics that is at once more complex and inclusive” (McCall, 2005, p. 1777). Intersectionality then, establishes the potential for feminist societal transformation, by exposing inequities most frequently found in locations of identity and power.

The central focus of intersectionality is identity and the oppressions that are associated with identities (Bowleg, 2008), gender/sexism or race/racism for example. Instead of prioritizing one aspect of identity such as race in critical race theory or gender in feminist research, intersectionality attends to multiple dimensions of identity, without necessarily prioritizing any one identity over another. Intersectionality challenges the oversimplification of social identities and single social locations such as race *or* gender, which creates false hierarchies and fails to represent experiences. Moreover, intersectionality neither quantifies, compares, nor hierarchizes identities and oppressions. For example, intersectionality does not include comparisons of class and race, to consider which is more oppressed; class and race cannot be equated with each other (Darder & Torres, 2004). Class and race intersect. Intersectionality challenges the hierarchal construction of identity categories without the prioritization of one identity over another. Similarly, an additive focus—race plus class plus gender for example—inadequately attends to the complex and dynamic interactions of identities and power (Bowleg, 2008; Hancock, 2007b; Hill Collins, 2000). Furthermore, an additive construction implies that aspects of identities can be subtracted. Instead, intersectionality addresses the location where identities overlap or intersect, and are inseparable. Khayatt (1994) argues, “unless

the boundaries of race, gender, class, and sexuality intersect to make visible the various nuances of each category, the usefulness of each becomes lost in a hierarchicalization of oppressions” (p. 7). Thus, nuances of identity are found in the intersections, which discourages the prioritization of any one identity over others.

The “hierarchicalization of oppressions” overlooks the nuances of identity categories when they intersect. Consider a Muslim woman wearing niqab, who is accosted by people shouting anti-religious epithets. In this example, intersections of religion and gender are interdependent and significant, although they may not be equal (Hancock, 2007a), which is a hierarchal concept. Furthermore, identities are nuanced in the sense that they affect this individual differently in different contexts (hooks, 2000); her religion may be a position of privilege in another context. Moreover, her racial identity may temper or exacerbate her marginalization as a Muslim woman in this context. The intersection of gender and religion is mutually constituted and cannot be reduced to one or the other; she would not be a target without both identities. As May (2014) argues, “without intersectionality, consciousness about racialized gender/gendered racial logics is not fully possible, nor is meaningful perception of women of color” (p. 101). Accordingly, social identities are mutually constituted and irreducible (Anthias, 2013a) to separate identities such as race or class; therefore, one location is not prioritized over others and locations cannot be untwined (Cookson, 2013; Dill & Zambrana, 2009; Khayatt, 1994; Knapp, 2005). Thus, identities cannot be hierarchized.

***Intersectionality research.*** Intersectionality has been engaged in research disciplines that include education (Block & Corona, 2014; Núñez, 2014b), psychology (Syed, 2010), law (Crenshaw, 1991; MacKinnon, 2013), and politics (Hancock, 2007a; Simien, 2007). Indeed, intersectionality is molded and applied to diverse disciplines, which results in flexibility, creativity, and diverse methodologies (Shields, 2008). Subsequently, intersectionality’s role in research has been controversial (e.g. Nash, 2008; Prins, 2006; Tomlinson, 2013); intersectionality has been critiqued for the absence of uniformity in intersectional methodology, and for the absence of methods specific to intersectionality (Hancock, 2007a; McCall, 2005; Nash, 2008). Intersectionality indicates, “both a normative theoretical argument and an approach to conducting empirical research that

emphasizes the interaction of categories of difference” (Hancock, 2007b, p. 63-64). Conversely, Davis (2008) proposes that intersectionality’s ambiguity is intersectionality’s strength, explaining, “the concept’s very lack of precision and its myriad missing pieces are what have made it such a useful heuristic device for critical feminist theory” (p. 78). Furthermore, she argues, “it stimulates our creativity in looking for new and often unorthodox ways of doing feminist analysis” (Davis, 2008, p. 79). Intersectionality involves complex examinations of social identities and their interactions, oppressive power structures and contexts. Intersectionality engages both research frameworks and analytical processes (Anthias, 2013a; Hancock, 2007a; Hill Collins, 2000; McCall, 2005; Tomlinson, 2013). Accordingly, in order to understand *how* to frame intersectional research, I first outline Hancock’s (2007a) theoretical assumptions about intersectional research and then review McCall’s (2005) germinal work about intersectional research approaches.

*Intersectionality research assumptions.* According to Hancock (2007a), intersectional research depends on several underlying assumptions. First, social identity is complexly intersectional (Hancock, 2007a; Shields, 2008) and incorporates multiple aspects such as race, class, and gender, among others. However, no one aspect can reflect the totality of identity (Block & Corona, 2014; Dill & Zambrana, 2009). Second, identities interact but not equally; for example, race and class locations are not *equal* influences (Hancock, 2007a). As hooks (2000) explains, “class difference destabilizes the notion that racism affects us all in equal ways” (p. 8). Third, identity locations are constructed from individual and institutional factors (Hancock, 2007a) such as personal experiences within systems such as education. Fourth, within-group diversity (Hancock, 2007a) challenges the concept of binary identities and encompasses contradicting locations (Anthias, 2013b). Fifth, intersectional analysis integrates multifaceted practices (Hancock, 2007a), which occur when aspects of identity are foregrounded or backgrounded (Shields, 2008). Finally, intersectionality, “requires attention to both empirical and theoretical aspects of the research question” (Hancock, 2007a, p. 251) through multiple research methods. The uniqueness of intersectionality lies in the commitment to all six of these principles.



*Intersectionality research approaches.* McCall (2005) identifies three intersectional research approaches—anticategorical, intercategorical, and intracategorical—which are defined by “how they understand and use analytical categories to explore the complexity of intersectionality in social life” (p. 1773). The anticategorical approach challenges the categorization of identities and rejects the “artificiality of social categories” (McCall, 2005). While this approach centres the voice of the marginalized and confronts binary constructs, McCall acknowledges that categorization is a social reality. The intercategorical approach analyses inequalities *between* social groups and is multi-group focused. For example, research about wage differences can compare employees’ education levels, or racial identities (McCall, 2005). The intracategorical approach examines categories in the context of other categories (McCall, 2005), leading to intensive study of single cases or groups, and analysis of within-group complexity and diversity (Denis, 2008). Ng (1996) for example, studied issues of class and gender within the context of immigration. Skeptical of categories and categorization, the intracategorical approach challenges essentialized interpretations of identities (Block & Corona, 2014), and incorporates within-category diversity and contradictory locations (Anthias, 2013b). This research study about the educational persistence of female Latin American students engaged an intracategorical approach that illustrates within-category diversity. In the next section, the Multilevel Model of Intersectionality is described in detail.

## 1.10 Multilevel Model of Intersectionality

Complex social relations and power interactions cannot be understood solely from the analysis of social identities (Anthias, 2011; Dhamoon, 2011; Hill Collins, 2015; Núñez, 2014b); there is the need for multiple layers or dimensions of analysis (Alemán, 2018; Bilge, 2010; Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013; Choo & Ferree, 2010; Hill Collins, 1990,2000; Knapp, 2005; Winker & Degele, 2011). The Multilevel Model of Intersectionality (MMI) presented in Figure 1.1 was developed by Anne-Marie Núñez (2014a, 2014b) and it frames this study. The Model builds on the model of multiple dimensions of identity created by Abes, Jones, and McEwen (2007), and draws on the scholarship of feminist sociologists Floya Anthias (2013a), Patricia Hill Collins (2000),

and Bonnie Thornton Dill and Ruth Enid Zambrana (2009). Furthermore, Núñez (2014a) maintains that the Model is particularly effective for understanding and analysing Latin American students' experiences and the multifaceted complexities of Latin American identities, since the Model challenges monolithic, essentialized perspectives of Latin American identities. In the context of other critical theories such as critical race theory or LatCrit, Núñez (2014b) argues that intersectionality is superior since it addresses *how* to study “relationships between systems of oppression” (p. 86). Indeed, it is this capacity that inspired engagement of the MMI in this study.

The Model has three levels; *Social Identities, Domains of Power, And Historicity*. Núñez (2014a) describes the three levels as follows:

(a) social categories and the outcomes of the associated relations of power (such as existing hierarchies), (b) four domains of practice that highlight social processes that construct and reify these categories, and (c) the historical context that shapes the development of social categories, relations among those in different categories, and processes that construct and sustain those relations (p. 49).

Each of the three levels are discussed in detail next.

### 1.10.1 Social Identities.

Social identities form the core of the MMI, which incorporates race, ethnicity, class, and gender, among other identities. Within this primary level, intersecting social identities are represented by multiple loops overlaid across the Model's centre, which symbolizes the perspective that no one identity explains the variations in experiences (Hernández, 2015), yet identities are mutually constituted. The elliptical nature of the loops represents the dynamic nature of identities, and the fluidity and flexibility of identity, which dismantles identity binaries (Anthias, 2013b; May, 2014; Nash, 2008), and challenges categories that are static (Cho et al., 2013), overly simplified, and essentialized (Anthias, 2011). For example, gender experience is dynamic and may depend on the contexts of age or race. Gender identity may be affected also by sexism, as racial identity may be influenced by

racism, and so on. Additionally, relationships between identities may be relevant (McCall, 2005), thus, the processes that influence social identities may be analysed at this level of the Model. Moreover, the loops indicate contradictory locations, whereby identities can signify privilege for some but oppression for others (Calliste & Dei, 2000), while contradictory locations may include both dominant and subordinate positions (Anthias, 2012a; Hill Collins, 2000). Furthermore, only some of the loops are labelled with suggested social identities, which presents the opportunity to incorporate other identities, without prescribing or limiting the identities for consideration. Finally, the layout of identities is not intended to indicate that identities have equal significance, but rather that significance is dynamic, rather than additive or hierarchical (Núñez, 2014a, 2014b).

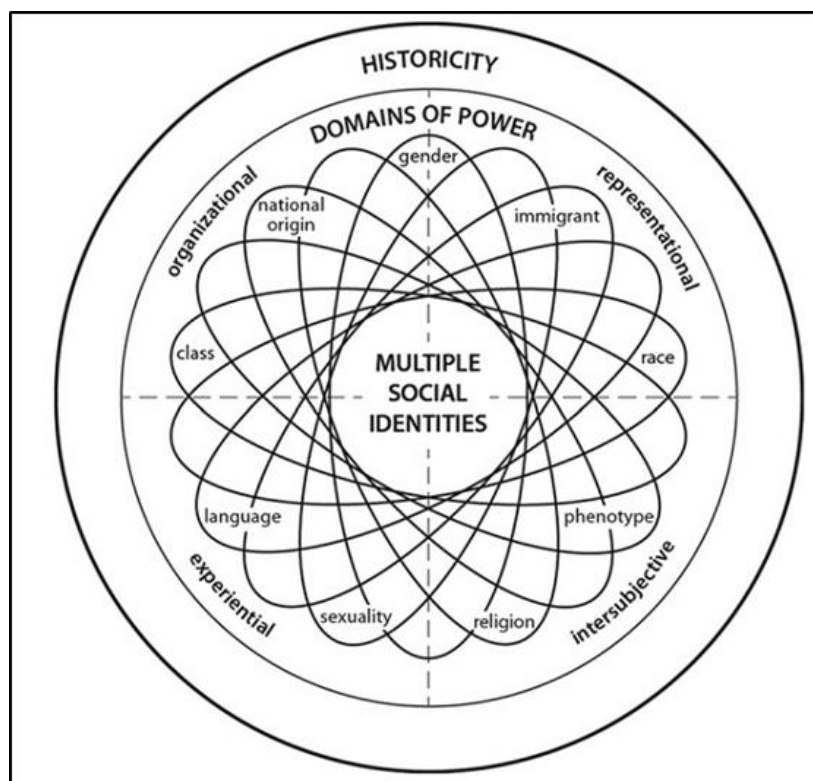


Figure 1.1 Multilevel model of intersectionality (Núñez, 2014a, 2014b).

One inherent challenge of intersectionality is *which* social identities to include in intersectionality research (Bilge, 2013; Cho et al., 2013; Knapp, 2005). Yuval-Davis (2006) argues, “there are some social divisions, such as gender, stage in the life cycle,

ethnicity and class, that tend to shape most people's lives in most social locations" (p. 203), and as such, are more likely to be included in intersectional research. Other locations such as religion—that may affect some but not *most* people's lives—would be included only when relevant to the context (Anthias, 2012a) and to research participants. For example, in her contextual application of the Model to research about Latin American youth, Núñez (2014b) prioritizes social identities that are relevant to the study participants, which includes immigration status, national origin, and language minority status. This study prioritizes the social identities most relevant to participants, rather than prioritizing parity between identities. Race, ethnicity, gender, class, and transnationality and their significance are introduced below. Note that study participants often conflated race with ethnicity (Anthias, 2011; Mora, 2014; Núñez, 2014a), therefore, the discussions and analyses in later chapters represent participants' perspectives of the intersections of race and ethnicity.

**Race.** Race is an essentializing social construct that designates boundaries, hierarchies, and power structures. Race is produced by people's racial interpretations (Darder & Torres, 2004)—their actions and reactions to race—racial interpretations that are created by the self, and those imposed by others (Fergus, 2009). As Hall (1997a) argues in his Goldsmiths College lecture, race is used as a floating signifier to establish difference; difference that includes expectations of abilities, behaviours, and characteristics (Darder & Torres, 2004; Hall, 1997a). Moreover, race is manipulated to construct hierarchy—superiority or inferiority (Darder & Torres, 2004; Dei, 1996)—while race gains “social currency because of its utility for distributing unequal power and privilege” (Calliste & Dei 2000, p. 21). Consequently, Hall (1997a) refers to race as “one of those major concepts, which organize the great classificatory systems of difference” (p. 6). This classification of difference is pervasive. Omi and Winant (2005) find that “race is a relatively impermeable part of our identities” (p. 5); it has a fundamental role in determining our place in society, for “when one cannot identify another's race, a microsociological ‘crisis of interpretation’ results” (Omi & Winant, 2005, p. 6). Hall (1997a) also states, “we are readers of race...we are readers of social difference” (p. 15). Accordingly, racial interpretation is inescapable. However, race is more than a signifier of difference; race incorporates power relationships into interpretations of race.

Therefore, race “must be seen in terms of a range of economic and political practices which structure forms of inequality for racialised groups” (Anthias, 1998, p. 526). Indeed, race influences class differences (Darder & Torres, 2004) for example. Ultimately, race interprets self and Other.

Latin American identity is a racialized, yet hybrid identity (Espinoza & Harris, 1998; Valdivia, 2005), neither Black nor White (Trucios-Haynes, 2000-1; Valdivia, 2005). As such, Latin Americans “don’t fit” North American racial constructs (Alcoff, 2006). Interestingly, Anzaldúa (1987) refers to “nosotros los mexicanos” [we the Mexicans], which she maintains is a racial rather than a national identity, and a “state of soul” (p. 84). Indeed, Latin American peoples may identify with cultural and national identities rather than racial identities (Alcoff, 2006). Yet, regardless of how people identify themselves, race is contextual (Alcoff, 2006; Dei, 2005; Omi & Winant, 2005), and may be ascribed (Anthias, 2011; Dei, 2000; Fergus, 2009), and racism is experienced within cultural and national identities. Furthermore, both race *and* ethnicity are essential in understanding Latin American identity, since *Latin American* encompasses racial and ethnic diversity, which are prioritized differently according to context (Alcoff, 2006). For example, in Latin America, racial categories are “subsumed” within larger ethnic groupings, yet in the U.S., ethnic categories are subsumed into racial categories (Alcoff, 2006). Consequently, in addition to self-interpretation, geographical contexts may influence the interpretation of Latin American race and ethnicity. The discussions in Chapters 4 and 5 identify Latin American participants’ experiences with complex racial identities, and racism within the education system.

***Ethnicity.*** Ethnicity situates and contextualizes identity within social, cultural, and political practices. Anthias (2001) defines ethnicity as, “the production and reproduction of collective and solitary bonds relating to origin or cultural difference” (p. 377). Perreira, et al. (2010) find that “ethnic identity represents the extent to which [individuals] feel close to their ethnic background and believe that their ethnicity is an integral part of their larger identity” (p. 134). Hence, ethnicity is an important aspect of identity in the context of others. Indeed, according to Hall (1996b), “we are all, in that sense, *ethnically* located and our ethnic identities are crucial to our subjective sense of who we are” (p. 447,

emphasis original). While Hall concludes that we all have ethnic identities, Anthias (2009) argues, only those who are racialized are *seen* to have ethnic identity.

Accordingly, ethnic identity and its attributes are *ascribed to* the individual, regardless of whether the ethnic identity is *assumed by* the individual (Anthias, 2011; Fergus, 2009).

Furthermore, ascribed ethnicities are subject to hierarchization, whereby comparisons are made between ethnicities, and ethnicity is ranked against other social identities such as gender and class (Anthias, 2011). Essentialized ethnic identities implicate gender and class differences, such that the experiences of wealthy people, or of women, are missing from narratives about ethnicity (Anthias, 2011). As a result, ethnicity hierarchization processes establish boundaries and differences that both signify social divisions and structural inequalities, and also satisfy divisions and inequalities (Anthias, 1998).

Moreover, these boundaries locate struggles for power, and cultural and material resources (Anthias, 2001). Consequently, ethnicity is embedded in social and political practices.

Latin American ethnicities are complicated by the intersections of ethnicity with race. As Alcoff (2006) argues, “at best, for people of color, ethnic identities will operate *alongside* racial ones in everyday interactions, without in any way dislodging the racial identities. At worst, ethnic identities...will operate simply *as* a racial identity” (p. 243, emphasis original). For Alcoff, Latin American race and ethnicity identifies a “both/and” situation. Yet ethnicity without race, an either/or situation, would leave some Latin American peoples still racialized. For Latin American ethnicity is conflated with race, perhaps particularly in discriminatory experiences. As Espinoza and Harris (1998) explain, “discrimination against people on the basis of ‘cultural’ traits is as common in our history as discrimination against them on the basis of ‘biological’ traits” (p. 538). Thus, ethnicity dynamically affects identity (Kiang & Fuligni, 2009). Study participants also conflated race and ethnicity, which is evident in participants’ discussions of discrimination, biases, and boundaries associated with racial and ethnic identities.

**Gender.** Gender is a socially constructed location of identity. For example, from her research with high achieving, African American young women, Hubbard (2005) finds gender “shapes how we form friendships and how we express ourselves; it defines the

expectations we hold about our futures” (p. 616). Thus, gender characterizes behaviour expectations and social interactions. Connell (2002) argues, gender is “the structure of social relations that centres on the reproductive arena, and the set of practices (governed by this structure) that bring reproductive distinctions between bodies into social processes” (p. 10). Gender is framed as a masculine/feminine binary construct that is manipulated to establish boundaries, hierarchies, and power relations (Anthias, 2012a; Connell, 2002; Connell & Pearse, 2015; Lather, 1991; Rands, 2009). In particular, this gender dichotomy structures feminine as difference, creates gendered subordination (Mohanty, 2003), and leaves no space for diverse gendered expressions by an individual woman, and between women with similar characteristics, for example. Conversely, gender is multi-faceted (Connell & Pearse, 2015; Francis, 2006; Lamas, 2011; Shields, 2008); fluid not fixed; a range rather than a dichotomy; and a temporal expression of traits, patterns, and identifications. It is for these complex expressions of gender that intersectionality provides space.

Gender intersects with other social identities such as race (Dei, 2005; hooks, 2000), class (Jackson, 2010; Ng, 1996; Reay, 2006; Skeggs, 2005), and ethnicity (Anthias, 2011; Connell, 2002; Francis, 2006; Melero, 2015; Vasquez, 2014). Núñez (2014a) identifies intersections of gender and ethnicity when she argues that, “Latinas face unique barriers related to [post-secondary] access compared with Latino men” (p. 59). Furthermore, gendered expressions and interactions may emerge or diverge from culturally-determined gender roles (Anthias, 2011; Bratini, Ampuero, & Miville, 2013; Connell, 2002; Francis, 2006). For example, Vasquez (2014) found that gender values and norms of U.S. Mexican American immigrants changed over time and became more egalitarian with subsequent generations. Gender norms and roles challenged the educational persistence (Lopez, 2003) of some Latin American participants in this study, while for other participants, gender norms were not barriers to education. Note that participants in this study self-identified as women.

**Class.** Class is a complex social construction that encompasses far more than the capacity of economic resources or class inequalities (Anthias, 2012a; Skeggs, 2005; Weis & Dolby, 2012). “Class involves your behavior, your basic assumptions, how you are taught

to behave, what you expect from yourself and from others, your concept of a future, how you understand problems and solve them, how you think, feel, act” (Brown, 1974, p. 15). Thus, class is multifaceted and is socially and culturally constructed (Bettie, 2014; Ng, 1996; Skeggs, 2005; Van Galen, 2007; Walkerdine, Lucey, & Melody, 2001), and located in dimensions of social relations such as education, mobility, occupation, residence, consumption, and behaviour. Furthermore, class centres lived experiences (Block and Corona, 2014; Van Galen, 2007; Weis & Dolby, 2012). Class “always” intersects with other social identities (Block & Corona, 2014), therefore, intersectionality provides space to engage class beyond consideration of economic resources and inequalities. For example, class is analysed in the context of race (Darder & Torres, 2004; Dei, 2005), ethnicity (Anthias, 1998), transnationality (Weis & Dolby, 2012), and gender (Bettie, 2014). However, Anthias (2012a) cautions against prioritizing individual manifestations of class inequalities at the expense of analysing systemic classed inequalities. The MMI facilitates intersectional analysis of complex aspects of class and classism.

Education is a critical class space (Cookson, 2013; Reay, 2006; Weis & Dolby, 2012). Consider that girls’ class in the context of education intersected with complex issues of gender identity and educational performance (Jackson, 2010; Reay, 2006; Walkerdine et al., 2001). For example, teen girls relied on their middle-class locations to perform their gender identity at school (Jackson, 2010). Since class complexities influence Latin American students’ educational progress (Núñez, 2014a), class analysis offers essential understanding of students’ education issues (Darder & Torres, 2004). There is a need for class analysis; the “conspicuous absence” of class analysis in education research hampers comprehension of Latin American students’ education (Darder & Torres, 2004). Participants in this study provide insight into a variety of education issues that are influenced by class, including PSE affordability and the challenges of working during PSE. Interestingly, despite the significance of class, few participants openly identified their class locations as such.

***Transnationality.*** Transnationalism is a “social process, in which trans-migrants maintain ‘multiple relations’—familial, economic, social, organizational, religious, etc.—across two or more societies: the home country and the new nation of settlement” (Sánchez &



Machado-Casas, 2009). Transnationalism influences dynamic, multi-faceted identities that encompass national space(s) and ethnic location(s) (Anthias, 2012a). Adoption of new contextualized identities contributes to transnationality. For example, African immigrant youth in Ibrahim's (2006) study adopted new "Black" identities as they embraced the language and cultural signifiers of stereotypical North American Black identities that they associated with rap music. Imposition of identities may also influence transnationality. The essentialization of Latin American identity is imposed, a North American phenomenon not prevalent in Latin America, where diverse ethnic, cultural, and national identities flourish. As Alcoff (2006) argues, "Latin identity generally signifies ones' situatedness outside of Latin America" (p. 228). Thus, "Latin" identity in North America signifies multiple identities, with transnational, contextual differences.

Transnationality is not restricted to those who migrate; all people may inhabit transnational spaces (Anthias, 2012b). For example, in the case of a family with some members who migrate while others remain in their country of origin, all family members are impacted by that migration and are thus transnational. Anthias (2009) explains, "the migration process influences homelands themselves, converting them into transnational spaces where goods, cultural ideas and values flow: this is reinforced by the phenomenon of return migration" (p. 8). The influences of transnationalism are far-reaching. Therefore, understanding transnational identities and relationships (Sánchez, 2001; Sánchez & Machado-Casas, 2009; Weis & Dolby, 2012) requires understanding dynamic, transnational contexts. Intersectionality in the form of the MMI provides that opportunity.

### 1.10.2 Domains of Power.

The secondary level of the MMI is the Domains of Power level. In addition to social identities, the Model addresses systemic power and oppressions through four, interdependent Domains of Power—*Organizational*, *Representational*, *Intersubjective*, and *Experiential*. According to Nunez (2014a, 2014b), the purpose of this level of the Model is to reveal the societal processes and the organizational practices that construct and perpetuate social identities. This study examines participants' educational persistence in the context of diverse power dynamics of privilege and oppression. There is a need for

understanding multiple power relationships, which the Model seeks to address with the Domains of Power. The analysis of power is critical to understanding individuals' experiences of societal systems. Consider the alternative; when social identities are held as the sole location of analysis, race for example, becomes the source of racism (Dei & Lordan, 2013) rather than the object of racism. Moreover, the analysis of racism is then limited to the individual and to race, instead of the analysis of racist societal structures (Dei, 1996; Hill Collins, 2009). Racism implicates the intersections of systems of power, and as Hill Collins (2009) argues, racism is not an individual moral failure but a systemic one. Therefore, analysis of race must include analysis of racism, and intersectionality in this study includes analysis according to the Domains of Power.

The analysis of power is critical to understanding individuals' experiences of societal systems, including individuals' expressions of power and agency. According to Foucault (1978), power relationships depend "on a multiplicity of points of resistance...[that] are everywhere in the power network" (p. 95). The multiple points of resistance are embedded in the Model's multiple layers to address the "broader social landscape of power and hierarchy" (Anthias, 2013a, p. 12). For, as Fernández (2002) explains, "by looking to the marginal (and often misunderstood) sociocultural practices of Latina/Latino youth, we get a deeper understanding of how they are oppressed but, at the same time, use their personal agency to resist their social conditions" (p. 48). Power and resistance are inextricably linked; power does not exist without resistance (Foucault, 1978). Núñez (2014a; 2014b) drew from Roscigno's (2011) "dynamic relational theory of power" to address relational processes that privilege some and oppress others. Thus, the MMI is designed to analyse the dynamic nature of power relations, the power and the resistance.

The Model design demonstrates the inter-relationship between power and identity, represented by the placement of the Domains of Power around Social Identities, in equal quadrants, while the dotted lines between the Domains represent their interdependence. The *Organizational* and *Representational* domains are located in the upper half of the model, and the *Intersubjective* and the *Experiential* domains are located in the lower half of the model. The Organizational domain analyses the production of social stratification

within social institutions that include legal, health, and education institutions. For example, Núñez (2014a) applies the Organizational domain to examine how organizations and institutions, particularly the education system, shape the education and life opportunities of Latin American students. In this study, Organizational analysis reveals that PSE tuition rates have economic and academic impacts on participants. The Representational domain involves discursive ideas and practices that influence and govern bureaucracies, and how such policies and practices influence individuals. Consider that the absence of anti-racism policies and practices within the education system is pervasive, despite findings such as those from Rezai-Rashti (1995), who argues that institutionalized racism is prevalent in the policies and practices of education institutions. A Representational examination of such power structures would illuminate the influence of institutional practices on students, particularly racialized students. In this study, participants illustrate how gender and class intersect to influence familial perspectives about girls' education.

The Intersubjective domain refers to the inter-relational practices of individuals and groups, including peer relationships and family influences. As Dei (2005) explains, racism "as a set of material practices, is about unequal power relations. It is also about how people relate to each other on the basis of defined social identities and identifications" (p. 21). These practices can be found in the assumptions or stereotypes held by teachers about Latin American students (Núñez, 2014a). In this study, intersubjective analysis demonstrates that educators marginalize female Latin American students' identity. Finally, the Experiential domain engages individuals' everyday experiences and their views of their own merit in the context of other domains. Núñez (2014a) applies the Experiential domain to Latin American students' internal narratives about their academic qualities. In this study, the Experiential domain is applied to participants' perceptions about their educational persistence and their beliefs about education. Evidently, analysis of the Domains of Power and the power structures they address are essential to understanding experiences and can effectively guide the analysis of participants' experiences within different societal systems, including the educational system.

### 1.10.3 Historicity.

The tertiary level of this Model is Historicity, which locates Social Identities and Domains of Power within historical, social, temporal, and spatial contexts (Anthias, 2012a; Núñez, 2014a, 2014b). Historicity forms the outer rim of the Model, encompassing everything within it, and represents how Historicity influences and contextualizes all experiences. Accordingly, Historicity includes the temporal and contextual dynamics of power relations (Bilge, 2010; Cho et al., 2013; Dill & Zambrana, 2009; Hill Collins, 2000; Shields, 2008; Yuval-Davis, 2011b), and provides the lens to examine the changeable nature of dominance and oppression (Anthias, 2012a). Additionally, Historicity challenges binary constructs of social inequalities (Darder & Torres, 2004; Walby et al., 2012), oversimplification of social locations (Bilge, 2010), and prescriptive applications of intersectionality (Bilge, 2013) because Historicity provides context. Contextualized by spatial, social, political, economic, and temporal aspects, Historicity is an essential point of analysis (Anthias, 2012a, 2012b). For example, Núñez (2014b) studied the education experiences of undocumented Latin American immigrants, who were impacted by the “intersecting contexts of power” that resulted from the 2008 economic downturn and concurrent U.S. immigration politics. This example demonstrates how these Latin American students’ educational experiences were influenced by temporal, political, and spatial contexts. Thus, Historicity is an essential element of intersectional analyses. In this study, participants’ experiences were considered in the context of these three levels of the MMI, as discussed in later chapters.

## 1.11 Dissertation Organization

This study introduction defined the research context of the increasing population of peoples of Latin American origins in Canada that coincides with a research gap about the experiences of Latin American students in the Canadian education system. Furthermore, this chapter illustrated the need for research about Latin American students—particularly female Latin American students—from a strengths-oriented perspective that seeks to understand academic persistence. The study’s theoretical and conceptual frameworks are found in critical theory and feminist theory. Finally, the review of intersectionality detailed the Multilevel Model of Intersectionality and its three levels that guide this

study. The MMI provides structure to the Chapter 2 review of literature that considers Organizational, Representational, Intersubjective, and Experiential influences on students' educational experiences. Chapter 3 identifies the qualitative case study research design and the data analysis processes. These multi-stage analysis processes engaged the MMI and are significant to one purpose of this study—to gain insight into intersectionality research and research with the MMI. Additionally, Chapter 3 introduces the study participants. Chapters 4 through 6 analyze research findings. Chapter 4 explores the historical and contextual factors of participants' educational persistence, including familial immigration, education, family dynamics, and participants' identity contexts. In Chapter 5, participants' negotiation of institutional dynamics illustrates their experiences with issues of privilege and marginalization. The focus on participants' academic, class, and familial motivational factors in Chapter 6 demonstrates participants' educational persistence despite the challenges they experienced and demonstrates participants' belief in the promise of education. Chapter 7 concludes this study with a discussion of the contributions, limitations, and recommendations of this study.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### 2.1 Overview

As discussed in Chapter 1, there is limited Canadian research about the experiences of people of Latin American origins in Canada (Armony, 2014; Shihadeh et al., 2013), and in particular, about the education experiences of Canadian students of Latin American origins (Gaztambide-Fernández & Guerrero, 2011; Guerrero, 2014). Furthermore, female Latin American students are almost indistinguishable in current Canadian research, which is another aspect of the gap in Canadian education research about Latin American students (Guerrero, 2014). Moreover, rather than investigating Latin American students' academic strengths and persistence, the Canadian education research that does address Latin American students identifies and examines students' educational difficulties. This literature review chapter identifies intersections of racial, gendered, and classed oppressions that female Latin American students may experience within the education system. It is important to note that although this literature review presents relevant information about complex, intersectional influences on the experiences of female Latin American students who persist within the education system, most research included here refers to U.S. contexts. This is problematic since U.S. constructs are not necessarily applicable to the Canadian sociohistorical context (Armony, 2014) and there are variabilities between the two contexts. However, the U.S. context can offer relevant information (Ginieniewicz & McKenzie, 2014) not available in the Canadian context. For more on this issue, see Appendix A.

The Multilevel Model of Intersectionality (MMI) Domains of Power contextualize students' educational experiences discussed in this literature review. The first section illustrates that the influence of Organizational factors can enhance and/or hinder students' educational progress, while the focus on systemic class reproduction through education presents an example of the power found in the class stratification embedded in the education system. The next section reviews research about social influences attributable to the Intersubjective and Representative Domains of Power. These influences include educators' racialized and gendered expectations (Cooper Stoll, 2013); parents' support for their children's education, particularly in the context of familism; and peers' creation

of social boundaries that engage racism, sexism, and classism. The final section addresses the Experiential Domain of Power by examining strategies of navigation and persistence that students who experience racial or ethnic discrimination, particularly female Latin American students, employ to deal with educational challenges.

## 2.2 Organizational Influences on Education Experiences

Organizational factors including school environments and cultures can significantly influence students' educational progress (Diprete & Buchmann, 2013). These factors can affect students' motivation, social acceptance, and educational attainment (Mroczkowski & Sánchez, 2015; Perreira, Fuligni, & Potochnick, 2010). Studies demonstrate that supportive school environments and supportive teachers are crucial to Latin American students' success (Antrop-González, Vélez, & Garrett, 2005; Enriquez, 2011; Perreira et al., 2010; Zalaquett, 2005, among others). For example, in a study that examined influences on Hispanic students' academic self-concept, supportive teachers positively influenced students' self-concept and homework completion (Calero, Dalley, Fernandez, Davenport-Dalley, Morote, & Tatum, 2014). Similarly, Latin American students were found to be more academically motivated when they felt socially accepted at school, and such acceptance was produced by factors that included supportive school personnel, constructive school experiences, and affirmation of students' ethnicity (Perreira et al., 2010).

Conversely, experiences of racial or ethnic discrimination challenge students' academic progress. For example, Canada's Ethnic Diversity Survey of more than 42,000 non-Aboriginal Canadian residents aged fifteen and older maintained that "race/ethnicity has become a salient factor in educational stratification" (Abada, Hou, & Ram, 2009, p. 1). Other research found that anxiety about racial discrimination experienced at school negatively affected Latin American students' academic motivation (Perreira et al., 2010) and correlated with poor academic performance and educational attainment (Mroczkowski & Sánchez, 2015). Interestingly, according to the U.S. national longitudinal study, Latin American and Black students who had experienced racism at school value education, even when they do not feel valued within the education system (Diprete & Buchmann, 2013). However, school alienation or the lack thereof does not

predict academic achievement. In a study of low income racialized students who experienced isolation at school, low achieving Latin American students felt isolated from their school culture, while high achieving Latin American students self-isolated themselves from their peers in order to pursue their academic goals (Conchas, 2006). Findings such as these introduce the complexities of organizational influences on educational progress.

Cookson (2013) illustrates the pervasive power of organizational influences on inequality reproduction in his comparative, ethnographic analysis of five “representative” high schools—representative of U.S. high schools according to a distinct spectrum of class characteristics and locations. With a focus on class reproduction within education rather than on institutional hierarchies, the study explored interactions between class and schooling, examined structural processes of inequality reproduction, and identified class reproduction in each of the five schools that represented the spectrum of class locations. Cookson (2013) argues, “high schools are organized to infuse students with a strong sense of their class position” (p. 108). Furthermore, Cookson explains that, “high schools create inequality through class-based sorting and selection mechanisms and also by subjectively transforming the psyches of adolescents into instruments of class continuity” (p. 109). Through day-to-day operations and without reliance on specific individuals or events, schools produce an infusion process that “stamps most students with the values and beliefs of their class,” and creates collective class memory (Cookson, 2013, p. 108). As students develop “deeply internalized class identity,” the system reifies societal class inequalities. Cookson identifies a significant social mechanism of class reproduction and presents a compelling case for the powerful and influential role that educational institutions play in the maintenance of class hierarchies and societal inequalities. These findings challenge societal myths of meritocracy and individualism, which indoctrinate expectations that the power of individual education and hard work will overcome hardship and the structural inequalities that pervade society. Although Organizational influences on students’ educational experiences as identified by Cookson (2013) and others are significant, Representational and Intersubjective influences perpetuate student oppression, and they are discussed next.



## 2.3 Intersubjective Influences on Education Experiences

Intersubjective influences on students' educational experiences involve complex interactions with educators, parents, and peers, among others. Research illustrates educators' deficit assumptions about students of colour and marginalization of female Latin American students (Lopez, 2003) with racialized and gendered constructs, which challenged the educational efforts of their students. Meanwhile, parents' support of students' educational efforts positively influences students' academic experiences. Additionally, peers are socializing agents who create boundaries when they employ the intersections of racism, sexism, and classism to develop hierarchies within peer groups and to delineate Other. Name calling, framing academic achievement, and conspicuous consumption are examples of such hierarchies. The intersubjective influences of educators, parents, and peers are discussed in turn.

### 2.3.1 Educators influence education experiences: Racism and sexism.

According to research, educators' deficit assumptions about students of colour involves intersections of racialized and gendered constructs that were detrimental to and challenged the educational efforts of their students (Cooper Stoll, 2013; Lopez, 2003). For example, colour-blind and gender-blind educators denied the existence of racism and sexism in their students' experiences (Cooper Stoll, 2013). Deficit assumptions about students of colour marginalize female Latin American students (Lopez, 2003, for example), which denies students' identities and denies their experiences with identity-based oppressions such as racism. Furthermore, teachers' intersectional conceptualizations of Latin American girls are particularly oppressive (Garcia, 2009; Hyams, 2006; Rolón-Dow, 2004). Educators employ power and influence over female Latin American students' education and socialization.

***Educators and racism.*** Educators have the potential to exert considerable influence over students' educational experiences, through interactions that involve racism. A recent study of new teachers' perspectives about equity, race, and racism found that these teachers practiced racial erasure, maintained deficit views of their "minority" students,

and expressed naïve acceptance of meritocracy (McKenzie & Phillips, 2016). McKenzie and Phillips (2016) argue that racial erasure occurs when teachers refuse to acknowledge or to address race and racism in the classroom, a process attributed to colour-blind racism (Cooper Stoll, 2013). In the colour-blind classroom, teachers deny the existence of and impact of racism on students, thereby effectively erasing students' racial identities and denying the racism students experience (Cooper Stoll, 2013). Colour-blind racism further rejects the existence of institutional racism and the need for teachers to challenge racism with strategies such as anti-racist education (Cooper Stoll, 2013). As such, teachers who exhibit colour-blind racism deny the existence of race and racism at school.

Yet research about students' educational experiences definitively exposes the racial oppression that Latin American students experience in educational contexts (Enriquez, 2011; Gatto, Daly, & Buttu, 2013; Lopez, 2003, among others). For example, Latin American students in Toronto indicated that their teachers held low expectations of their academic abilities and their social interactions, which contrasted with the leniency and trust they perceived that their teachers held for non-Latin American students (Gatto, Daly, & Buttu, 2013; Gaztambide-Fernández & Guerrero, 2011). Latin American students were publicly disparaged by their teachers and felt afraid of their teachers; they believed they were not welcomed or valued at school (Gatto, Daly, & Buttu, 2013). Marginalized as Other (Gaztambide-Fernández & Guerrero, 2011), they experienced racist stereotypes that included *stupid*, *lazy*, and *gangster/criminal* (Gaztambide-Fernández & Guerrero, 2011). Gaztambide-Fernández and Guerrero (2011) conclude, "the amount of racism reported by students was perhaps the most disheartening aspect of the research" (p. 8). Experiences of racial/ethnic marginalization such as these examples were common experiences for the Latin American students in these studies.

Latin American students of Dominican origin in New York experienced gendered racism from their teachers (Lopez, 2003). This study found that female Latin American students' academic evaluation reflected their conformity to social behavioural norms, and they "learned that being a good student was related to social behavior, rather than academic achievement" (Lopez, 2003, p. 65). Lopez concludes that patterns of the intersections of racism and sexism in education reflect societal oppressions rather than individual

potential and abilities. Such interactions are “fueled by teachers’ raced, classed, and gendered perceptions of students’ ability and willingness to succeed” (Enriquez, 2011, p. 485). The underlying messages of these interactions leave lasting impressions. In a retrospective analysis of the education experiences of five adult Mexican American women doctoral students, Taylor and Fernandez-Bergersen (2015) examined students’ strategies to cope with and persist despite educational racial barriers. All participants clearly identified oppression from racism that they experienced in their K-12 schooling. These oppressions included the efforts of school personnel to track them into low academic course streams, and into futures that would involve unskilled labour instead of university. Regardless of whether or not educators acknowledge the racism that students experience, these findings demonstrate that Latin American students in these studies encountered educators’ racism.

Educators’ approach to racism as an individual issue instead of a systemic one is emblematic of systemic issues of marginalization and oppression. For example, consider the intersection of race, poverty, and low achievement. Educators attributed students’ low achievement to factors external to the school’s influence—individual, family, and community issues such as poverty, which teachers determined are race-neutral barriers (Cooper Stoll, 2013)—without contemplating the education system’s role in low achievement (Cooper Stoll, 2013; McKenzie & Phillips, 2016). Furthermore, educators’ colour-blind racism established and maintained the illusion that education ensures all students have equal opportunities (Cooper Stoll (2013), which McKenzie and Phillips (2016) refer to as a naïve acceptance of meritocracy. When educators believed in the merit process, whereby student outcomes are the sole responsibility of individual abilities, racism and sexism barriers were perceived as individuals’ issues (McKenzie & Phillips, 2016) rather than systemic barriers that educators were responsible to address. This acceptance of meritocracy incorporates racial erasure and deficit views, which leaves no space for educators to understand their culpability in or responsibility to address, the racism that students endure at school.

***Educators and sexism.*** Cooper Stoll (2013) argues that “gender-blind” schooling occurs when teachers are confident in a postfeminist perspective, which purports that sexism and

gender inequalities are no longer problematic. Moreover, educators in her intersectional study of racialized and gendered practices in the classroom justified some gender inequalities as natural phenomena, acceptable differences, or unimportant (Cooper Stoll, 2013). Accordingly, male privilege and heteronormativity in the classroom were disregarded and institutional sexism deemed insignificant. Similarly, a Canadian study of teen girls found that although the girls were frustrated by teachers' preferential treatment of boys, girls did not or could not identify such unequal treatment as sexism (Pomerantz, Raby, & Stafanik, 2013). Instead, girls recognized the loss of power from sexism as an individual rather than an institutional problem. These studies raise questions about the implications of educators' gender-blindness that denies the existence of gender stratification within their classrooms, and whether educators' perspectives may encourage students' own denial of sexism's existence in these and other contexts.

Educators' gendered expectations influenced their perceptions of female Latin American students' academic ability, such as when they conflated moralized gendered judgements with academic expectations. Consider the experience of a female Latin American student whose teacher directed her to participate in "feminine" school activities in order to become more socially acceptable and less masculine (Bratini et al., 2013). Other studies determined that teachers' gendered behaviour expectations of students meant that Latin American girls were not disciplined as harshly as Latin American boys, and girls experienced stricter social controls (Lopez, 2003). For example, teachers expected Latin American girls to be amenable and not disruptive; teachers rewarded girls who demonstrated "traditional feminine" behaviours (Lopez, 2003). Thus, girls learned that teachers attributed academic success to compliant social behaviours including passivity, silence, and obedience, rather than academic achievement (Lopez, 2003).

Perhaps educators' attempted control over gender identity is nowhere more striking than in their challenge to Latin American girls' sexuality. Research determined that educators in several studies policed Latin American girls' sexuality under the guise of championing girls' education (Garcia, 2009; Hyams, 2006; Rolón-Dow, 2004). Teachers perpetuated stereotypes of the intersections of gendered racism that framed Latin American girls' sexuality as contradictory to academic achievement (Garcia, 2009; Hyams, 2006; Rolón-

Dow, 2004). A study about the intersections of heteronormativity, sexism, and racism found that some teachers imposed moral standards on Latin American girls' sexuality (Garcia, 2009). Teachers reprimanded Latin American girls who expressed their curiosity about sex during high school sex education classes, and warned girls that virtue is bound with chastity (Garcia, 2009), while boys received no such messaging or judgment (Garcia, 2009). Similarly, teachers sought to control Latin American girls' sexuality when they battled girls about their clothing choices, according to Hyams' (2006) investigation of Latin American girls' gender and sexual identity development. Girls explored issues of sexuality, morality, and identity through their clothing selections, yet teachers policed Latin American girls' fashion preferences for the "danger" girls presented because of their bodies (Hyams, 2006).

Teachers in these studies moralized Latin American girls' sexuality further by contrasting sexuality with academic achievement. Latin American girls were dichotomized as either intellectual or hypersexual, "oozing with sexuality" (Rolón-Dow, 2004). The "overriding emphasis teachers placed on Puerto Rican girls' sexuality" meant that teachers imposed a moral value to girls' gender identity (Rolón-Dow, 2004, p. 15). Thus, these teachers inflicted gendered behaviour expectations that were endorsed as academic behaviours, on Latin American girls. Similarly, educators determined that Latin American girls' academic achievement required teacher-imposed control of girls' sexual desires, through the monitoring of the girls' clothing and dating relationships (Hyams, 2006). Teachers perceived Latin American girls' sexuality as incompatible with educational well-being. These perceptions "placed the onus of responsibility for success and failure on the girls" (Rolón-Dow, 2004, p. 25), and concentrated teachers' interest and concern for Latin American girls on individual rather than systemic issues. Evidently, high school may not be gender neutral for Latin American girls (Hyams, 2006).

Female Latin American students in these studies were subjected to intersections of racial and gendered misconceptions about their identities at the expense of their learning. When educators in these studies exerted power and influence over female Latin American students' education and socialization, educators challenged the educational efforts of their female Latin American students with detrimental constructs at the intersections of

racism and sexism. As Cooper Stoll (2013) effectively concludes, “the denial of institutional racism and sexism virtually assures the perpetuation of both” (p. 60). Latin American students’ parents also have power to influence education.

### 2.3.2 Parents influence education experiences: Support and familism.

There is considerable research about the importance of Latin American parents’ influences on their children’s education, and the “fundamental and complex role that family plays” (Gloria & Castellanos, 2012, p. 92). Some Latin American parents even “organized their entire lives around their children’s education” (Gonzales, 2012, p. 131). Parental influences that contribute to Latin American students’ academic outcomes include the relationship between parents’ educational attainment and their children’s achievement and aspirations (Carranza, You, Chhuon, & Hudley, 2009), and the impact on school satisfaction when immigrant parents and their children communicate about school (Gloria & Castellanos, 2012; Gerritsen & van Zenderen, 2012). This literature review concentrates on parents’ influence through the support they provide, and familism.

***The role of parental support.*** Research demonstrates that Latin American parents are important educational supports for their children (Segovia, Parker, & Bennett, 2015), and parents provide encouragement that motivates children academically (Kimura-Walsh, Yamamura, Griffin, & Allen, 2009; McWhirter, Valdez, & Caban, 2013). Family support has been an important predictor of Latin American students’ educational motivation (Ceja, 2006), and success (Zalaquett, 2005). And when Latin American parents value education, their children are more likely to value education (Garcia-Reid, Peterson, & Reid, 2015; Gerritsen & van Zenderen, 2012; Segovia et al., 2015; Zalaquett, 2005). Latin American parents have expressed “immigrant optimism” (Feliciano & Lanuza, 2015; Gerritsen & van Zenderen, 2012), whereby they expect their children to persevere and succeed despite the challenges their children may encounter. Parental monitoring is another parental factor found to be “most predictive of academic outcomes” (Plunkett, Behnke, Sands, & Choi, 2009, p. 265). Latin American adolescents report that when their parents monitor them—know their friends, whereabouts, and activities—they are more

likely to focus on their academics, and this focus generates academic motivation and higher grades (Henry, Merten, Plunkett, & Sands, 2008).

Parents' educational expectations influence Latin American students' academic outcomes (see Calero et al., 2014; Carranza et al., 2009; Feliciano & Lanuza, 2015; McWhirter et al., 2013; Segovia et al., 2015). For example, in a longitudinal study of undocumented post-secondary students in Los Angeles, the majority of study participants, "attributed their educational persistence to their families' educational expectations and messages" (Enriquez, 2011, p. 484). As Carranza, You, Chhuon, and Hudley (2009) conclude, "students, particularly females, who perceived that their parents expected them to get good grades, study hard, and complete their homework, reported higher achievement and aspirations" (p. 326). Moreover, high expectations may coincide with pressure to not to let parents down (Venzant Chambers et al., 2015), which in turn can inspire academic achievement. Interestingly, when Latin American students "perceived" their mother's high academic aspirations for them, they were more likely to be highly engaged with their academic pursuits (Henry et al., 2008; Plunkett et al., 2009).

Research has identified connections between children's gender and/or parents' gender, and the effects of Latin American parents' support for their children's academic efforts on academic motivation (Alfaro, Umaña-Taylor, & Bámaca, 2006). For example, while both parents were found to be important to academic engagement (Plunkett et al., 2009), some studies determined that mothers' academic support had significant and positive effects on their daughters' academic motivation and engagement (Alfaro et al., 2006; Henry et al., 2008; Kaplan et al., 2007; Plunkett et al., 2009). These positive effects included influence on daughters' attitudes toward school and positive school adjustment (Kaplan et al., 2007). Mothers' support was more predictive of academic results than fathers', particularly for girls (Plunkett et al., 2009, p. 266). However, in a study that confronts comparisons between the efforts of mothers and fathers, and challenges detached-father stereotypes, Terriquez (2013) found that Latin American fathers are "just as likely" to participate—attend school meetings and events, and volunteer—in their children's school activities as white fathers. Nevertheless, immigrant fathers were less likely to participate than U.S. born fathers; limited English fluency and socioeconomic

background were prohibitive influences on some fathers' school involvement (Terriquez, 2013).

While in many instances reliance on parental support by Latin American students was generally beneficial for students academically, students' transitions to post secondary education (PSE) became a context where over-reliance on parents' support became a barrier to academic progress. When parents had little to no experience with PSE, they could not provide significant information or advice (Ceja, 2006; Gloria & Castellanos, 2012; Gonzales, 2012; Kimura-Walsh et al., 2013; Zalaquett, 2005, for example). The transition to PSE was perhaps the context which necessitated the most support, yet when Latin American students were unable to rely on parents in this particular situation, students' support systems dynamically changed. However, despite their lack of knowledge and understanding about PSE, parents were supportive still (Gloria & Castellanos, 2012).

***The role of familism.*** Educational well-being is associated positively with familism (Esparza & Sánchez, 2008; Roche, Ghazarian, & Fernandez-Esquer, 2012; Stein, Cupito, Mendez, Prandoni, Huq, & Westerberg, 2014; Stein et al., 2015). Familism or *familismo*, “requires an individual family member to put the needs of the family first, even if it means making personal sacrifices” (Sy & Romero, 2008, p. 214). When Latin American PSE students have close relationships with their parents (Fuligni & Pedersen, 2002) students are “supported and confident” (Venzant Chambers et al., 2015). Another aspect of familism that positively influenced Latin American students' educational persistence is affiliation with their ethnic identity (Gonzales, 2012; Perreira et al., 2010; Streit, Carlo, Killoren, & Alfaro, 2018; Venzant Chambers et al., 2015, for example). Retention of Spanish language skills is one mechanism for ethnic identity retention, which has been found to positively correlate with educational attainment (Feliciano & Lanuza, 2015; Venzant Chambers et al., 2015).

Respect and obligation are important factors of familism, regardless of socio-economic locations (Stein, Rivas-Drake, & Camacho, 2017). For example, “students with a strong sense of family respect tended to report more positive school climate and this positive



school climate was associated with greater academic motivation” (Perreira et al., 2010, p. 148). Familism provides a context for Latin American students’ obligation to persist educationally (Fuligni & Pedersen, 2002; Perreira et al., 2010; Sánchez, Esparza, Colón, & Davis, 2010; Zalaquett, 2005). Family obligation motivated Latin American children to “support, assist, and respect the family” (Fuligni & Pedersen, 2002, p. 866), moreover, that obligation included fulfilling parents’ education expectations of them (Fuligni & Pedersen, 2002). Thus, pursuit of PSE was more than an individual goal, it was a responsibility to family, and “a means to honor their parents and help their siblings” (Zalaquett, 2005, p. 41). Respect and responsibility to honour parents was a significant motivator for academic achievement (Gloria & Castellanos, 2012). Additionally, in the context of familism girls’ education was seen as an “investment” which would benefit the whole family over the long term (Ovink, 2014).

Through familism, parent sacrifices for the family become powerful reinforcements for their children’s academic success (Enriquez, 2011; McWhirter et al., 2013). “Many participants expressed feeling that it was important to do well in school as a show of appreciation for the sacrifices family members made” (Venzant Chambers et al., 2015, p. 810). Parents advised their children to take advantage of educational opportunities, to achieve what the parents themselves had not the opportunity to achieve (McWhirter et al., 2013). For example, mothers’ low education level was a motivator for their daughters’ academic efforts to succeed where their mothers had not (Cammarota, 2004; Ovink, 2014; Sánchez et al., 2010; Gerritsen & van Zenderen, 2012). As Cammarota (2004) argues, “it was obvious to many Latina youth in this study that their mothers and previous generations of women had spent their lives helping their families survive. Obtaining a degree meant showing respect for their mothers’ struggles and sacrifices” (p. 64). Such acts of respect coincided with familism (Sánchez et al., 2010). Thus, education represented family goals and family sacrifices (Gonzales, 2012).

Familism did not provide a beneficial space for the education of all children of Latin American immigrants. For example, due to familial obligations, some students delayed their post-secondary education (Stein et al., 2015), particularly when the family relied on their employment income for survival (Sánchez et al., 2010). Familism involved support

for the family economically (Sánchez et al., 2010; Sy & Romero, 2008; Venzant Chambers et al., 2015; Zalequett, 2005). “Children do it out of a ‘culture of concern,’ resulting from years of socialization to respect and value family above personal needs” (Cammarota, 2004, p. 219). However, Ovink (2014) argues that, “Latinas more often reported the ‘burden’ of intense pressure to perform both educationally and financially” (p. 283), which suggests gendered differences in familism experiences. While familism indicates that family needs are prioritized over individual needs, sometimes the family needs the children to work, and in some instances, the family needs the children to attend PSE. Consider that children’s self-sufficiency through PSE relieved families of the burden to financially support them (Sy & Romero, 2008).

Not all families were supportive of children’s education (McWhirter et al., 2013). Therefore, some Latin American students sought and valued educational support from other factions such as peers and teachers (Garcia-Reid, Peterson, & Reid, 2015). While familism has many benefits, Familism produces educational barriers when students prioritize helping family instead of prioritizing their own education (Feliciano, 2012). Additionally, in some instances students’ focused efforts on education can “create a distance with family” (Venzant Chambers et al., 2015, p. 811). Thus, parents provide support for their children’s academic endeavours, yet the demands of academic performance may test the familial relationship between parents and children (Espinoza, 2011). Significantly, the power of familism is limited; familism does not have the power to “counter discrimination” (Stein et al., 2015) that students’ experience within the education system. Regardless, it seems accurate to conclude that family involvement was critical (Gloria & Castellanos, 2012) to the educational achievements of the majority of Latin American students in these studies. The boundaries that school peers create using racism, sexism, and classism to marginalize peers, are considered next.

### **2.3.3 Peers influence education experiences: Creating boundaries.**

Peers influence education experiences; studies determined that dominant students engage racism (Bablak, Raby, & Pomerantz, 2016; Baker, Price, & Walsh, 2016), sexism (Pomerantz et al., 2013), and classism (Jackson, 2010; Reay, 2006) to create boundaries

that marginalize their peers. For example, both girls and boys were found to play an active role in the gender socialization of girls (Pomerantz et al., 2013; Reay, 2001; Rodriguez-Navarro, García-Monge, & Rubio-Camos, 2014). Similarly, class intersects with gender to produce an important element in how girls think about and understand themselves and each other (see Jackson, 2010; Reay, 2006), whereby peers engaged class signifiers—particularly peer-defined markers of consumption—to create classed gender boundaries. The discussion below illustrates the influences of dominant peers who created boundaries by engaging the intersections of racism, sexism, and classism to marginalize and exclude.

***Peers as socializing agents.*** Students perceived racism as an abstract concept, the power of racism visible but unseen (Bablak et al., 2016; Baker et al., 2016; de Finney, 2010; Raby, 2004). Although dominant (white) and minority peers downplayed the existence and influence of racism, dominant peers exercised racism to subordinate peers, and to exclude and identify racialized students as Other. Consider the Ontario teen girls who were interviewed about their experiences with culture, gender, race, and sexuality. They deflected discussion of race and racism, and instead focused on issues of skin tone, clothing, and popularity (Raby, 2004). Furthermore, study participants presented themselves as race-blind anti-racists, although they referred to racist incidents at school as “just” stereotypes and bias, rather than racism (Raby, 2004). Similarly, in a survey of urban Newfoundland high schoolers, dominant students initiated racist actions to inform identities and claim white group membership (Baker et al., 2016). Participants engaged colour-blindness, racist jokes, and reverse racism in their efforts to appear non-racist, all the while reifying racial inequalities. Even those participants who had witnessed racist incidents dismissed racism as something that occurred only in other places (Baker et al., 2016). Hence, racism was attributed to *overt* racist acts, whilst racist micro-aggressions were trivialized, downplayed, and denied (Bablak et al., 2016; Baker et al., 2016; de Finney, 2010; Raby, 2004). Thus, racist comments that were used to exclude and identify students as Other, were dismissed as harmless.

The complexity of peer-initiated racism is evident in the experiences of racism by students who do not conform to the black-white binary—such as peers of Asian identity

or Latin American identity—in the context of who determines identity. Research indicates that mechanisms of racism were employed to impose identity on Latin American students (see for example, Conchas, 2006; Fergus, 2009). In a study to understand the relevance of skin colour, identity, and peer racialization of Mexican-origin and Puerto Rican-origin high school students, one significant challenge students faced was “how their external identification was being framed by skin colour” (Fergus, 2009, p. 359). Participants were identified by peers as either White-looking/Latino, Mexican/Hispanic looking, or Black/biracial-looking. This skin tone categorization process occurred regardless of how study participants identified themselves. Moreover, participants indicated that their own self-identification was influenced by how peers identified them (Fergus, 2009). Understanding Latin American race and racialization involves more than just knowing who *is* Latin American, but also who *gets to be* Latin American (Fergus, 2009).

Similarly, the nickname *The Asia* for one Cambodian-identified participant was a “manifestation of racism that served to not only position her as outside of the group, but to also strengthen the exclusivity of the [dominant] group” (Bablak, et al., 2016, p. 9). The student herself recognized the inherent racism that was couched in her peers’ supposedly friendly behaviours, yet this nickname clearly represents racialized power relationships that create boundaries. Asian-identified students were racialized by their peers even when these peers denied their own racism. Dominant peers conceptualized race with a white-centric lens, which framed white as the norm and everyone else as Other. Regardless of where peers were born, peers attributed Canadian identity to white and English-speakers only, and adolescents in the study assumed that race and culture were relevant only to non-white students (Raby, 2004). Racism was practiced or performed, whereby adolescents proclaimed anti-racism, denied racism, yet engaged racism to “gain situational dominance” (Raby, 2004, p. 372). Evidently, the boundaries peers created amongst themselves may not reflect an individual’s self-identity, and the power of such identification may not be held by the individual.

In addition to being powerful race-socializing agents, peers are also powerful gender-socializing agents. Not only were students gender-socialized by their peers, but also

research identifies differences in gender-socialization approaches between male and female peers (Pomerantz, Raby, & Stefanik, 2013; Reay, 2001; Rodriguez-Navarro et al., 2014). For example, in an examination of the influence of peer-generated gender behaviour codes—messages about gender “appropriate” behaviour—new immigrant students quickly learned gender hierarchies from gendered play (Rodriguez-Navarro et al., 2014). Less active than boys’ play, girls’ play established common values such as consumption and beauty. Additionally, girls acted as hosts for new girls; however, the process of welcoming newcomer girls concurrently established loyalty-driven hierarchies (Rodriguez-Navarro et al., 2014). Conversely, boys deployed gender behaviour codes to reject girls’ participation in boys’ play, and boys enforced this gender hierarchy, often aggressively (Rodriguez-Navarro et al., 2014). Likewise, in her intersectional study of primary school children, Reay (2001) found that gender-conforming girls were left alone, while other girls experienced gender conformity harassment by classmates, and particularly by boys. Similarly, a Canadian study indicated that teen boys judged girls harshly, rejected them as inferior, and critiqued their appearance (Pomerantz et al., 2013). Thus, gender acceptance came with loyalty and even obedience between girls, while boys policed girls’ gender behaviours, and rejected non-conforming girls as Other.

Class also affects how students construct their own and peers’ identities (Jackson, 2010; Phoenix & Tizard, 1996). For example, social class influenced students’ perceptions of peers in London, England study (Phoenix & Tizard, 1996). Social class was a conscious signifier for middle-class students, who were anxious and insecure about their class identities. Furthermore, they had limited interactions with working-class people; they and/or their parents looked down on working-class people and deemed working-class people “incomprehensible and repugnant” (Phoenix & Tizard, 1996, p. 436). Regardless of class locations, most of the students compared themselves with students from other classes, constructed boundaries between themselves, and identified with their own class (Phoenix and Tizard, 1996). Although it is dated, this study clearly indicates the pervasive application of social class boundaries between young people at school.

***Manifestations of peer socializations.*** Peers create racialized, gendered, and classed boundaries about each other. Here, three examples of peer-created boundaries

demonstrate intersectionality in peer socialization through name calling, constructing academic achievement, and conspicuous consumption through clothing.

*Name calling.* As students negotiate inclusion and exclusion boundaries in peer relationships, they engage name calling to create power hierarchies. For example, while Irish primary school children in group interviews did not articulate racism as such, they were aware of racism and were capable of constructing racism (Devine, Kenny, & Macneela, 2008). Their name calling focused on skin colour, highlighted peers' differences and deficits, and was the mechanism for power, status, and social control (Devine et al., 2008). Furthermore, the children clearly knew that racial name calling was not tolerated at school, and they acknowledged that racial name calling is racist (Devine et al., 2008). Alternatively, name calling of Traveller children—marginalized, Irish ethnic minority peoples in Great Britain—was not considered as unacceptable as racial name calling; the children did not find the harm in it (Devine et al., 2008). Thus, ethnicity and class intersected in this boundary-making through name calling. Similarly, Reay (2004) conducted research in English urban schools and revealed complex class constructions of the schools and the students who attended them. Middle-class students referred to working-class students as 'slags', 'tramps', 'druggies', 'tarts', 'lowlives', and 'rubbish' (Reay, 2004). While girls who did not measure up to middle-class standards according to their clothing choices, were called 'scruffs', 'scrubbers', and 'tramps' (Jackson, 2010). Although seemingly trivial, the simple mechanism of name calling by dominant-group students created hierarchical intersections amongst peers. Thus, Reay (2004); Devine, Kenny, and Macneela (2008); and Jackson (2010) demonstrate the complexities and challenges that race, gender, and class presented to students as they developed their own identities and interpreted the identities of others. Intersectional analysis of institutional influences on these processes (Cookson, 2013) would have proved interesting.

*Constructing academic achievement.* Peers framed academic achievement as a mechanism to signify difference. In a comparative case study analysis of race and racism as experienced by low income, high achieving Latin American, African American, and Vietnamese students, Conchas (2006) explored how race and ethnicity operated as students navigated a "racially hostile school environment," whereby racial stereotypes

appeared to correspond with academic rigour. For example, participant Rocio stated, “our opinions about how good the programs are here, are based on race” (Conchas, 2006, p. 64). Rocio further explained common perceptions that classes filled with Asian and White students were academically rigorous and valuable, while classes filled with Black and Latin American students were academically weak. In a Canadian study, peers of Asian-identified students did not perceive the “smart Asian” stereotype to be racist, particularly when some Asian-identified students did not appear to object (Bablak et al., 2016). Conversely, dominant peers also constructed Asian-identified students as *too* studious and too academically successful, which was then deemed un-Canadian (Bablak, et al., 2016). This no-win context for Asian-identified students, is fueled by racism. Evidently, peers employed race as a floating signifier (Hall, 1997a) to create boundaries that defined identity, belonging, and even academic value or rigour.

Participants in Jackson’s (2010) interview research in Northern England framed their own academic efforts at the intersections of gendered class boundaries. Middle-class teen girls’ social power relied on constructed personas that balanced social and academic pursuits, and projected images of effortless (and successful) school work to maintain positions of popularity (Jackson, 2010). Popularity in part relied on the appearance that participants did well academically without exerting the necessary effort; meanwhile, such girls had resources such as computers at home, to work hard on their school work in private. Jackson (2010) concludes, “without a doubt the social class position of these girls underpins and is central to their image of ‘got it all’. It is their class position that facilitates their balancing of social and academic realms” (p. 165). Academic identities were carefully crafted to create gendered classed identities. While dominant peers framed Asian-identified students as smart but too studious and thus un-Canadian, middle-class girls produced their academic identities as smart enough to do well without seeming to exert the required effort.

*Conspicuous consumption – clothing.* Consumption was a critical class identifier for youth (Phoenix & Tizard, 1996), with clothing an important signifier young people employed to effectively symbolize identity and create boundaries to define themselves and Others (Block & Corona, 2014; Devine et al., 2008; Jackson, 2010). For example, in

their intersectionality research with immigrant male youth in Barcelona, Block and Corona (2014) found that clothing provided a signifier for class, and consequently, acceptability. Study participants determined that their clothing signified their poverty, and they longed for their clothing to tell a different story. Specifically, they sought to project the image of rap singers, which would quell the stigma of their poverty; they sought to project identities with specific ethnic, gender, and class intersections (Block & Corona, 2014).

Middle-class girls in Northern England established consumption parameters to define popularity, such that clothing provided intersections of class and gender to signify acceptability (Jackson, 2010). Participant Nassima explained, “it’s who’s got the best shoes I think, the best pointy shoes. And the best hairdos, best coats, bags, shoes, everything, make-up, best looks” (Jackson, 2010, p. 159). Gender intersects with this classed process, as clothing determined the “‘acceptable’ ways of ‘doing girl’” (Jackson, 2010, p. 158). Finally, in their study of young children, Devine et al. (2008) found that children identified Traveller children by signifiers of poverty such as the well-worn clothing that Traveller children wore. Furthermore, participants reserved poverty-associated terms for the Traveller children. These examples clearly demonstrate that young people are attuned to the power of boundary signifiers located in the clothing they and their peers wear. Thus, clothing creates intersectional boundaries, to signify the dominant group and Other.

The research findings discussed here indicate that young people employed intersections of race, gender, and class to create boundaries which identified who belongs and who is Other. Boundaries significantly favour the dominant group. For example, racial boundaries in schools were white-centric, while gender boundaries were male-centric. The next section addresses strategies that students engaged to persist against peer-developed boundaries fostered at school.

## 2.4 Strategies of Navigation and Persistence

While this literature review has examined Organizational and Intersubjective challenges to and influences on students’ education experiences, this is a strengths-oriented study,



thus it is important to review the strategies students engage when they experience challenges such as those discussed above. Specifically, this next section considers how students of colour, particularly female Latin American girls, navigate such challenges (Taylor & Fernandez-Bergersen, 2015). The two strategies addressed here are assimilation into the dominant (white) culture, which often results in the loss of social identities, and resistance to the dominant culture, which involves challenges to dominant discourses.

#### 2.4.1 Assimilation into the dominant culture.

Retrospective interview research with “successful” adult Latin Americans about their life experiences reveals the challenges of navigating dual cultures, their own and the dominant culture (Urrieta, 2007). Participants maintained that although their families and communities supported their education commitments, participants were faced with the contradictions presented by schools that devalue non-white culture (Urrieta, 2007). Although assimilation enables students to navigate the education system, assimilation also results in the loss of identity. Study participants recognized that their positive academic identities developed as they traversed the education system and social classes, “at the expense of their ethnic identity” (Urrieta, 2007, p. 130). Venzant Chambers, Lock, and Tagarao (2015) define this “racial opportunity cost” as the “price high-achieving African American and Latina/o students pay in their pursuit of academic success” (p. 801). Adolescent girls’ efforts to assimilate into the dominant (white) culture and their resultant “racial opportunity cost” are clearly evident in findings from de Finney’s (2010) longitudinal, focus group study in Victoria, BC. about participants’ belonging, representation, and intercultural engagement. Significantly, Indigenous girls engaged coping mechanisms that included alteration of their appearance in order to be perceived as white as possible. In effect, they sought to erase the intersections of racial, ethnic, and gender of their identities, in their search for assimilation.

Research shows that girls modify their gender identity in order to assimilate, and this process may in turn facilitate boys’ dominance. Influenced by intersections of class, ethnicity, and sexuality, some girls in Reay’s (2001) study experimented with their gendered identities, and even challenged conventional feminine identities. However,

other girls highlighted the superiority of boys and boyhood, an approach which “bolstered the boys’ power at the expense of their own” (Reay, 2001, p. 163). Furthermore, Reay argues that boys, particularly white, middle-class boys, are the measure to which girls compared themselves; thus, some girls constructed *themselves* as Other. Similarly, high achieving girls in a Canadian study prioritized boys’ preferences over their own. They sought to “dumb down” to influence how boys perceived them, thereby assimilating into the dominant gender culture and conforming to its expectations of how girls (should) behave (Pomerantz et al., 2013). Interestingly, girls in the same study also expressed frustration with gender differences within the classroom, yet they attributed gender power differentials to individual rather than systemic issues (Pomerantz, et al., 2013). Additionally, girls hesitated to label sexism as such, and denied the disempowerment they perceived within sexism. Girls “used the language of post-feminism to individualize and rationalize gender inequality” (Pomerantz, et al., 2013, p. 204). These studies illustrate occasions whereby girls mask their gender identities and assimilate into the dominant conventional norms of gender.

In circumstances where girls sought class mobility through educational attainment (see for example Bettie, 2014; Ovink, 2016), assimilation involved loss of identity from adopting characteristics of the dominant culture. For example, to traverse class, Mexican American girls relinquished aspects of their racial/ethnic and class identities in Bettie’s (2014) ethnographic comparative study of working-class white and Mexican American high school girls. Additionally, research found that assimilation occurred when academic success required heavy time demands on students, which may have distracted from family responsibilities and stressed family relationships (Venzant Chambers et al., 2015). For some students, there are clear cultural differences between school and home; as Espinoza (2010) argues, “Latinas find themselves caught in a cultural bind between meeting the demands of their individualistic-oriented school culture and their collectivist-oriented family culture” (p. 319). Even though academic ability creates the opportunity for academic achievement, the cost is high, and for some female students, that cost includes identity assimilation.

When challenged by assimilation, research indicates that some Latin American students have balanced assimilation with retention of their own culture, which has positively influenced students' achievement (for example see Carranza et al., 2009; Gibson & Hidalgo, 2009; Colón & Sánchez, 2010). Consider findings from a study of ethnic identity and academic achievement among Latin American teens; Zarate, Bhimji, and Reese (2005) conclude that identity ambiguity facilitates school navigation. "Those who learn how to become skillful border crossers and navigators have an advantage in school both socially and academically" (Gibson & Hidalgo, 2009, p. 704). Latin American youth are better able to navigate the education system when they engage with both their own and the dominant culture, instead of only assimilating, whereby their own culture is marginalized.

Research finds that balancing assimilation with identity retention is beneficial for Latin American school girls' academic achievement (Barajas & Pierce, 2001; Colón & Sánchez, 2010; Zarate & Gallimore, 2005). For example, instead of assimilation, girls navigated the dominant culture at school, and also retained their Latin American identities and cultures (Barajas & Pierce, 2001). Furthermore, Latin American girls who navigated both cultures were in a better position to develop positive relationships with teachers and councillors, and thus were more likely to pursue PSE counselling in high school and to enrol in post-secondary education (Zarate and Gallimore, 2005). Another strategy employed by Latin American girls is to develop supportive relationships with peers, relationships that insulate them from intersections of racism and gendered oppressions within the school system (Colón & Sánchez, 2010). Moreover, when Latin American girls have positive racial and ethnic identities, they are more likely to achieve academically. "Latinas navigate successfully through negative stereotypes by maintaining positive definitions of themselves and by emphasizing their group membership as Latina" (Barajas & Pierce, 2001, p. 859). Apparently, Latin American girls' identities and self-efficacy may support their efforts to navigate racism experienced within the education system.

Gender identity adds complexity to issues of assimilation for female Latin American students (Bratini et al., 2013; Lopez, 2003). Research indicates that for some, the

interplay between dominant gender norms and conventional gender norms and discourses continuously challenged and contested each other. Girls constructed their gender identities with input from both their Latin American gender discourses and assimilation with the dominant, North American gender discourses (Vargas, 2008). For example, although study participants demonstrated “conventional definitions of femininity and heterosexual relations”, they also incorporated elements of alternative femininities, which Vargas (2008) suggests may be a strategy to challenge the oppressive gender discourses of Latin American culture (p. 213). Consider findings from an intersectionality study of institutional practices and changing gender roles in New York City schools (Lopez, 2003). High school girls had conventional Latin American cultural perspectives about gender in the context of their families and had non-conventional expectations about gender in the context of their future careers. These often-conflicting expectations manifest in how the girls engaged with education; for some, their non-conventional drive for education and a career challenged their conventional beliefs about their gendered family responsibilities.

Gender assimilation is situational and is more complex than the augmentation of conventional gender roles and expectations with those of dominant cultures. As the research discussed here demonstrates, female Latin American students accepted and rejected gender identities that reflected both their own and the dominant culture. The complexities of gender and ethnic intersectional identities extend beyond merely a rejection of conventional gender socialization; some study participants resisted both conventional and dominant gender norms. Thus, resistance offers an alternative strategy to assimilation.

#### 2.4.2 Resistance for educational persistence.

Students employ resistance to challenge dominance and oppression within the education system. For example, analysis of findings from the Ethnic Diversity Survey—which inquired about the ethnicity of non-Aboriginal Canadian residents—characterized educational persistence by non-dominant students as “resistance to mainstream society’s limited expectations and pervasive structural deficiencies” (Abada & Tenkorang, 2009, p. 595). Students resist racial marginalization and challenge dominant deficit discourses

while they persist educationally. Furthermore, education itself is a form of resistance; “the pursuit of higher education at least for second generation females can be regarded as a transformative resistance that challenges systematic inequalities” (Abada & Tenkorang, 2009, p. 602). Accordingly, for women who are second generation children of immigrants, education is political, and resistance is intersectional.

Jamie Lew’s (2006) intersectionality study of high- and low-achieving children of Korean immigrants in New York City demonstrates how intersections of racial and ethnic social and economic contexts influenced students’ navigation strategies. Low-achieving Korean American students were more likely to assimilate and ultimately reject their ethnic identities; they established social connections with other students who were also challenged by racism and poverty, including African American and Latin Americans students (Lew, 2006). Conversely, middle class, high achieving Korean American students were more likely to retain their ethnic identifications. Additionally, they initiated resistance and ethnic pride to challenge racialization. Often perceived as un-American for their academic efforts, the high achieving Korean American students worked hard in school in order to *challenge* their marginalization (Lew, 2006). Thus, race and class intersect in the assimilation and resistance strategies that the Korean students engaged.

Similarly, high achieving and highly focused “Asian-identified” students were deemed “un-Canadian” by their peers because they prioritized their education over other activities (Bablak et al., 2016). Asian-identified students submitted to being defined as “high-achieving”, in order to attain or maintain their status at school, and some Asian-identified students viewed this stereotype as positive, benign, or even “good racism” (Bablak et al., 2016). Their capitulation to racism sustains racial hierarchies and normalizes racism, however, any challenge to this racism would result in isolation and exclusion by their peers (Bablak et al., 2016). Thus, middle-class Asian-identified students negotiated intrinsic academic rewards of high achievement with the exclusion it produced. Their educational persistence intersected with their resistance.

Significantly, research demonstrates that students challenged endemic racism that identified them as low achieving, by working hard for academic achievement (see for

example Carter Andrews, 2009; Hubbard, 2005; Lew, 2006; Ovink, 2016). Mexican American women in one study were motivated to succeed as a *result* of racial marginalization; they engaged their strength and determination in the face of oppression (Taylor & Fernandez-Bergersen, 2015). Similarly, students “used their school-based marginalization as a tool for their academic motivation to prove to their peers they had the potential to be good students” (Antrop-González et al., 2005, p. 87). Consider findings from a study of high achieving Black students in a predominantly white U.S. high school, whereby participants challenged the dominant discourse about Black students’ under-achievement (Carter Andrews, 2009). Participants saw themselves as smart, successful students, and their positive self-concept included pride in their academic abilities as well as their racial identities. “Although constructions of achievement were raceless, the task of achieving was race loaded for many of these students” (Carter Andrews, 2009, p. 309). Unlike the students in Conchas’ (2006) study, participants perceived academic achievement as raceless in the sense that achievement is not determined by race (Carter Andrews, 2009). Conversely, the processes of achievement were racialized; participants found they had to work far harder than their dominant peers. Students persisted to resist racial marginalization, and to disprove misperceptions about themselves; they established strengths-oriented perspectives about their identities.

***Identity and resistance.*** Maintenance of a strong ethnic identity by Latin American students can be an important, positive influence on their academic achievement (Antrop-González et al., 2005; Mroczkowski & Sánchez, 2015; Perreira et al., 2010 for example). Ethnic identity can be engaged as a protective factor against the impact of racial discrimination on academic outcomes. For example, in their study of factors that encourage Latin American students’ academic performance, Colón and Sánchez (2010) conducted in-class surveys with urban 12<sup>th</sup> graders. Strategies such as maintenance of Latin American culture including Spanish language proficiency were protective factors, particularly for girls, who had higher GPA and lower absentee rates (Colón, & Sánchez, 2010). Venzant Chambers et al. (2015) concur, arguing, “a strong grounding in family and language was what helped [students] become successful in their schools” (p. 808). Additionally, bilingual abilities are positively associated with educational attainment;

speaking Spanish with friends and mothers had a positive effect on university completion rates for Latin American women (Blair & Cobas, 2006). In defiance of the challenges posed by educational racism, ethnicity is positioned as a location of strength for Latin American female students in these studies.

Research found intersections of ethnicity and gender pride produced a resistance mechanism for Latin American women. For example, participants expressed pride in their working class, gendered, Latin American identities that they developed as a result of struggles against oppressions found in the intersections of gendered, racialized, and classed experiences (Bratini, et al., p. 156). Similarly, high-risk Latin American young women—with risk defined by sexual activity and drug use—identified themselves as strong, independent, confident, and agentive (López & Chesney-Lind, 2014). Importantly, they articulated a positive self-body image that included their “curves” and “brownness”, which challenges conventional gender roles and thin, white, (dominant) beauty stereotypes (López & Chesney-Lind, 2014). Evidently, the women in these studies internalized pride in their identities, to persist despite the challenges of discriminatory experiences.

Girls may construct their identities as resistance to oppressive practices. For example, some of the girls in Reay’s (2001) study resisted conforming to dominant discourses of feminine behaviour at school. Their self-empowerment however, was deemed *inappropriate* girl behaviour according to their teachers, and was subsequently rejected within the institution. Likewise, academic persistence and achievement were engaged to intentionally challenge the discriminatory practices and low expectations experienced by academically successful, low income African American teen students (Hubbard, 2005). They “came to believe in their own efficacy.... that they were able to navigate the educational system to their benefit” (Hubbard, 2005, p. 612). Furthermore, their decisions to pursue academic achievement as acts of resistance were influenced by their intentions to avoid the struggles of their undereducated mothers (Hubbard, 2005). Thus, academic achievement and resistance to low expectations, were sources of strength.

*Class mobility as resistance.* In a challenge to Cookson's (2013) denunciation of meritocracy, research illustrates that Latin American students and their families resist class oppression in their search for class mobility through educational efforts (Enriquez, 2011; Lopez, 2003; Ovink, 2014; Venzant Chambers et al., 2015; Zalaquett, 2005). As discussed earlier, Cookson (2013) argues that the reproduction of class structures within the education system challenges societal myths of meritocracy and individualism, and specifically the belief in an individual's power to overcome hardship and societal inequalities through education. However, consider Ovink's (2014) study of the influences on Latin American students' post-secondary education pathways, whereby she analyzes class, gender, and race/ethnicity factors. The intersectional analysis reveals participants' classed perspectives and interpretations of education's significance. Unlike middle-class families, working-class Latin American families in her study valued education for its potential to improve family prospects and challenge their class positions (Ovink, 2014). Study participants anticipated class mobility as resistance.

Research demonstrates that Latin American girls were more likely to do well when they saw economic value in education, and girls' higher GPA scores were attributed to this understanding (Colón & Sánchez, 2010). Girls took pride in their academic achievements and identified with gender characteristics that include strength, independence, and responsibility (Lopez, 2003). They pursued education to become independent, and to challenge conventional patriarchal and societal discourses about their gender identities. Additionally, Latin American girls foresaw that post-secondary education would guarantee their independence as women (Ovink, 2014). Clearly, the desire for class mobility is evident in girls' intentions to do well at school and seek better lives for themselves. Noticeably, while similar expectations by Latin American girls are evident in other research (Enriquez, 2011; Venzant Chambers et al., 2015; Zalaquett, 2005, for example), such expectations are not analysed within the context of class, which indicates the need for intersectional analysis with class as an entry point, to further the understanding of female Latin American students' class identity and mobility.

Class mobility as resistance can be more subtle, whereby students sought to create a better future for themselves and their families without framing their goals as a challenge



to oppressive societal structures. “Successful” Latin Americans of Mexican origin examined their educational mobility (Urrieta, 2007). Study participants established a self-determined positive academic identity at a young age and were tracked into education programs that fulfilled their strong academic abilities (Urrieta, 2007). However, the resultant isolation from their working class Mexican American peers, who were typically tracked into the low-achievement classrooms, realized racial and class differences. Consequently, participants associated working-class peers as lower class and lower academically, and accordingly subscribed to an education system that equates class with academic ability (Urrieta, 2007). Furthermore, participants “often equated lower working class with being more ‘Mexican’ or having more ‘Mexican’ cultural traits” (Urrieta, 2007, p. 129). Hence, participants created intersections of ethnic, racial, and class boundaries between themselves and other Mexican-identified students, which is reminiscent of racial boundaries created by peers in studies discussed previously (see for example Conchas, 2006; Pomerantz, Raby, & Stafanik, 2013), and intersections of gender and class boundaries (Jackson, 2010; Reay, 2001). Although Urrieta’s study participants were academically motivated, they were also aware of the class implications should they not succeed.

Similarly, intersectionality studies of working class white and Mexican American California high school girls reveal racial differences between participants’ experiences of educational mobility (Bettie, 2002, 2014). Tracked into college preparation classes, the working-class girls were aware of class differences and that they had to work harder than their middle-class peers. Additionally, Bettie found disparities in how the girls differentiated themselves from their middle-class peers; while white girls identified class differences, Mexican American girls recognized differences in intersections of race and class. As Bettie (2002) argues, “the correlation of race/ethnicity with poverty promotes the belief that middle-class status and whiteness are one and the same” (p. 417). Furthermore, similar to the participants in Urrieta’s (2007) study, the Mexican American girls relinquished their racial/ethnic and class belonging in order to assimilate. Apparently, the class mobility of the working-class white girls was less complicated than for the Mexican American girls (Bettie, 2014). Urrieta (2007) and Bettie (2014) illustrate that Latin American students who prioritize academic achievement and class mobility

engaged a variety of strategies to navigate the intersectional boundaries they experienced in the education system, boundaries which were influenced by racism, sexism, and classism. As evidenced by the literature reviewed here, racialized girls and women in education contexts respond to systemic discrimination and oppression by employing assimilation and resistance strategies, which may be effective when carefully navigated.

## 2.5 Summary

This literature review chapter explored some of the power dynamics within the education system, and the strategies that students engage to navigate issues embedded in the intersections of racism, sexism, and classism they find in their schools. Wherever possible, this discussion prioritized research that centres female Latin American students. The research reviewed demonstrates the challenges female Latin American students experience within the education system, and the strategies that they may engage to persist despite those challenges, strategies which include retention of ethnic identity to insulate themselves from oppressive contexts, and resistance with pride in identity.

Examination of Organizational power influences on students' educational experiences focused on school environments and systemic class reproduction through education and identified the education system's capability in maintaining power imbalances through the reproduction of class structures. To examine Intersubjective power relations, the review of teachers' power influences identified their racialized and gendered expectations of students. However, teachers' binarization of Latin American girls' sexuality with their academic achievement exposes the potential severity of teachers' power. Next, the examination of parents' influences on education experiences maintained that parents' involvement was critical to educational achievement for Latin American students in these studies. Then, the examination of peers' influences on educational experiences demonstrated that peers create boundaries to include and exclude peers. For example, the peer performance of racism is complex; on the one hand peers downplayed and denied its existence, yet they employed racism to Other their peers. Gender boundaries that peers create are often boy-centric; girls compared themselves to boys, and boys were often aggressive as they framed girls as Other. Finally, the investigation of students' strategies

to navigate racialized, gendered, and classed power dynamics illustrated that strategies involved context-dependent assimilation and resistance.

This review informed analysis and understanding of the educational experiences of this study's participants. Additionally, this review reveals the need for more intersectionality research. As Raby and Pomerantz (2016) assert, there are "vast differences in how girls experienced their academic success based on their positioning as raced, classed, and social subjects in the school" (p. 77). Much of the research discussed here isolates or prioritizes social identities. As Lapayese (2013) argues, "little research provides rich and thorough descriptions of how race and gender intersect to influence schooling for Latina students" (p. 486). Consider for example, the study of immigrant student integration by Rodriguez-Navarro et al., (2014), which saw boys aggressively exclude girls from their play. An intersectional analysis of race and class would establish a more nuanced understanding of these complex, gender-socialization processes. Class issues are relevant to Latin American students and their families (see Lopez, 2003; Ovink, 2014; Urrieta, 2007), and may dominate the education experiences of Latin American girls (see for example Bettie, 2014; Ovink, 2014). However, class analysis was limited in many studies, although Cookson's (2013) findings about class socialization within the education system clearly indicate the complexity of class influences within education. Intersectional analysis of contextualized social identities and power relationships provides a complex, in-depth understanding of female Latin American students' education experiences. The next chapter presents the research methodology and methods engaged to conduct this study and includes a detailed discussion of intersectional analysis practices.

## Chapter 3: Methodology and Methods

### 3.1 Overview

The growing population of Latin American peoples in Canada and Latin American students in the Canadian education system coincides with a gap in the research about Latin American students' educational experiences in general, and female Latin American students' experiences in particular. Furthermore, the limited scholarship that does prioritize Latin American students in Canada addresses issues of academic deficiency, particularly in the context of students who do not meet standardized education targets such as high school completion. Instead, research that considers students' strengths and achievement rather than only their weaknesses and failure, establishes complex perspectives and understanding of Latin American students' educational experiences and educational needs. Therefore, this critical, qualitative case study explored and offers insight into the Canadian educational experiences of female Latin American students, who educationally persist despite the barriers they encounter. Barriers that participants experienced included racism (Abada, Hou, & Ram, 2009; Mroczkowski & Sánchez, 2015), educators' low expectations (Cooper Stoll, 2013; Guerrero, 2014), and marginalization by peers (Bettie, 2014; Conchas, 2006; Fergus, 2009).

The overarching question for this study is, *How do female Latin American students persist in the Canadian education system?* This question originates from the case proposition (Yin, 2014), that female Latin American students are educationally persistent. This chapter outlines the research methodology and methods engaged for this study. Discussion of the project's qualitative case study approach is followed by an overview of the research design, which includes data collection methods and recruitment procedures, and then a detailed account of the multi-stage data analysis practices, which provides insight into application of the Multilevel Model of Intersectionality (MMI). The penultimate section introduces the 15 study participants. Finally, ethical considerations and a discussion of study trustworthiness and limitations complete the chapter.

## 3.2 Qualitative Case Study

In order to answer the research question posed, this exploratory, single level case study (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014) consists of semi-structured, in-depth interviews to gather insight into the participants' perspectives of their everyday lived experiences (Bowleg, 2008). For, as Merriam (2009) explains, "qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (p. 5). Furthermore, qualitative research allows me as a critical feminist researcher to learn from participants' perspectives about power relations in the context of intersections of personal, structural, and contextual experiences, to challenge inequities, and to seek social justice transformation. As Merriam reasons, "research focused on discovery, insight, and understanding from the perspectives of those being studied offers the greatest promise of making a difference in people's lives" (p. 1).

Several fundamental characteristics of qualitative research are present in this study. First, qualitative research is a social process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Patton, 2015) between researcher and participant, which elicits deep understanding of real-world, lived experiences (Patton, 2015) and complex interrelationships (Patton, 2015; Simons, 2009). Second, as the main instrument of the research process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2015; Simons, 2009), I as the researcher immersed myself in all aspects of data collection and analysis. For as Denzin and Lincoln (2005) argue, "all research is interpretive; it is guided by the researcher's set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied" (p. 22), therefore my engagement in all stages of research was paramount. Third, qualitative research creates meaning in context (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2015), context which provides greater breadth, depth, and complexity of understanding of participants' experiences.

Case study fosters in-depth, contextual research. The purpose of case study research is "particularization—to present a rich portrayal of a single setting to inform practice, establish the value of the case and/or add to knowledge of a specific topic" (Simons, 2009, p. 24). In this case, the single setting refers to the educational experiences of female students of Latin American origins who are the units of analysis, and the case

explores their experiences. Case study looks to the margins, explores outliers, and reveals significance rather than frequency (Cohen et al., 2011). In other words, the case study uncovers unique features that otherwise may be overlooked in larger scaled research (Cohen et al., 2011). Case study establishes the opportunity to examine a unique situation in depth (Flyvbjerg, 2011; Gomm, Hammersley, & Foster, 2000; Merriam, 2009; Simons, 2009). Research depth produces understanding about how participants interpret their lives, and contributes to participants' self-knowledge (Simons, 2009). Contextual understanding is vitally important in case study research; context provides meaning and complexity to a case (Flyvbjerg, 2011; Merriam, 2009; Simons, 2009; Verschuren, 2003; Yin, 2012). Additionally, contextualizing the case has the potential to better engage both research participants and the research audience (Simons, 2009). The MMI introduced in Chapter 1 (see Figure 1.1) frames this study, and clearly incorporates context and depth.

One common critique of case study research is that results are not generalizable (Flyvbjerg, 2011). Research generalization involves meaning extrapolation to a larger population from a smaller sample. However, case study research involves unique cases of a specific situation rather than representative samples (Cohen et al., 2011; Yin, 2014). This uniqueness is a strength that involves analysis rather than statistical generalization (Cohen et al., 2011; Verschuren, 2003). As a result, case study by its very nature cannot contribute generalizations in a representative sense (Simon, 2009; Stake, 1995), which may be considered a limitation (Flyvbjerg, 2011; Gomm et al., 2000). Moreover, case study research produces knowledge that, while not generalizable, interrupts assumptions and generalizations, and consequently expands knowledge (Simons, 1996, 2009; Verschuren, 2003). Simons (2009) explains the paradox, "by studying the uniqueness of the particular, we come to understand the universal" (p. 231), which contributes to the expansion and generalization of theory (Cohen et al., 2011). Furthermore, generalizations come in many forms. Yin (2012) challenges the presumption that statistical generalizations are the only generalizations of value, while Bassey (1999) differentiates between generalizations with predictive outcomes—to seek certainty—and generalizations with interpretive outcomes—to define what occurs in specific contexts. The intention of case study research is to "capture the essence of the particular in a way we all recognize" (Simons, 2009, p. 167), and to define what happened to participants in

specific contexts, rather than to search for generalizability about their experiences. The intracategorical (McCall, 2005) intersectional approach of this case study focuses on the uniqueness of the participants themselves, to explore within-case variability.

Consequently, qualitative case study is a particularly effective approach to explore the educational experiences of the Latin American participants in this study. This study produced knowledge about participants' unique case of their racial, ethnic, gender, and class identities, within Canadian educational contexts of institutional and intersubjective relationships. Moreover, this study produced understanding about the particular experiences of female Latin American students who challenge deficit perceptions and persist academically despite challenges. Finally, the study suggests inferences rather than generalizations about the educational experiences of other Latin American students, and even other marginalized and/or immigrant students.

### 3.3 Research Design

In this qualitative exploratory case study, data collection entailed in-depth, semi-structured interviews that followed a research guide of open-ended questions and relied on rapport between researcher and participant. All interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and anonymized, and those procedures are discussed in more detail below. Field notes during interviews captured information about each interview session. Additionally, on-going journal and memo writing documented researcher processes and reflections.

#### 3.3.1 Data collection methods.

The interview was the most effective method to collect the data sought—personal perspectives, understanding, and interpretations (Cohen et al., 2011; Johnson & Rowlands, 2012)—which cannot be collected as effectively by other methods such as direct observation (Patton, 2015). For interviews to be an effective data collection method, knowledge is socially co-constructed by the interviewer and participant (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Johnson & Rowlands, 2012; Rapley, 2012; Roulston, 2014), although the influence each has over the process varies. While participants' power comes from their decisions about how they answer questions and what they discuss, the

researcher determines interview topics and data collection practices. Interviews followed an interview guide (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Edwards & Holland, 2013; Hesse-Biber, 2014) for semi-structured interviews (see Appendix B. Interview Guide) with the intent to temper the power imbalances that occur in interviews between the researcher and participants (Edwards & Holland, 2013; Hesse-Biber, 2014; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Power imbalances are more likely to be moderated when there is less structure (Edwards & Holland, 2013; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011) and participants have agency during the interview (Hesse-Biber, 2014). For example, to build rapport and trust (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Grinyer & Thomas, 2012), each interview began with a conversational, open-ended statement such as, “Tell me about yourself.”, which helped to establish a comfort level between the researcher and each participant, and engendered general life history responses about such topics as education and family. Follow-up questions sought descriptive information that would reveal family relationships, class locations, immigration situations, and educational issues.

Researcher flexibility and spontaneity (DeVault & Gross, 2012; Edwards & Holland, 2013; Hesse-Biber, 2014; Roulston, 2010), and active listening (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; DeVault & Gross, 2012; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011) ensured the relevancy of interviews for participants (Patton, 2015). For example, questions about education experiences such as, *What are you like as a learner?* elicited requests for clarification and produced limited responses from the first participants interviewed. When the request was adjusted to, *What is education like for you?* or, *Tell me about your education experiences.*, participants seemed more comfortable in their understanding of the topic and their answers included rich details and depth. Furthermore, open-ended questions such as these optimized the potential for participants to generate their own answers (Hesse-Biber, 2014), to share their experiences freely, and to direct the interview conversations (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Grinyer & Thomas, 2012; Johnson & Rowlands, 2012). Relaxed, conversational processes maintained the focus on participants (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). For example, when Benita discussed her children I mentioned my son’s pending marriage. That information contributed to rapport and connection without dominating or derailing the conversation. Moreover, that mutual conversation may have encouraged Benita’s lively discussion about Quinceañera, which



produced rich information about gender roles, family, and education that are addressed in Chapter 4. The interview process contextualized participants' experiences and developed multi-layered understanding of meaning (Ravitch & Riggan, 2017).

Despite my best intentions to create an equitable interview space, these efforts were limited. While I acted with an attitude of respect (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014), with the belief that the participants are the experts, they perceived me as an expert as well. For example, each participant was invited to comment on educational attainment research, which found that Latin American students were less likely than students of other ethnicities to complete university degrees (Abada et al., 2009). Although participants are highly educated women themselves, none directly challenged the validity of those findings in the context of their own education experiences. Conversely, several participants rightly disagreed with the implications of the question, *How were you judged at school?* since it assumed that they were judged, and in later interviews, the question was revised to, *If you were, how were you judged at school?* Additionally, my racial, class, and/or educational privileges may have influenced participants' engagement with the interview process. Consider the context of the question, *Who is privileged at school?* Several participants discussed racial (white) and class privilege. However, Benita answered, "White people. Sorry."; Elena replied, "I don't want to say.", before discussing race, and she apologized several times throughout that conversation; while Mayra altogether avoided the word "race". These examples suggest that my racial privilege may have influenced some answers to this question. Undoubtedly, there are other instances where my privilege interfered.

Upon reflection during data analysis and particularly review of transcripts, the subtleties of the researcher/participant power imbalance were evident in the ethical dilemma of how deeply to probe (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). When I continued to ask questions, participants continued to answer. It seemed almost an automatic or rote response to answer questions according to researcher expectations and needs. During the interviews, most participants seemed to have their guard down, and in only a few instances questions were deflected and answering avoided. When topics got more intimate and could trigger emotional responses, I was sensitive to the impact on participants and asked participants

for permission to delve deeper. No one denied such requests. The researcher/participant power relationship may have encouraged participants to answer without apparent restraint. Reflection leads to my conclusion that the relationship between researcher and researched is an unbalanced power relationship that requires constant vigilance and reflexivity.

### 3.3.2 Recruitment procedures.

Recruitment used a purposive, typical sampling strategy (Patton, 2015) to locate participants typical to specific criteria and who would best contribute insight to the study. Participants were adult, post secondary students and recent graduates who had spent a minimum of four years in Canadian K-12 schools. Fluent English speakers, participants are daughters of immigrant parents from Latin America, and they were born in Canada or had immigrated to Canada as children. Participants identified as female. For this exploratory case study, there were no limitations on participants' country of origin, race/ethnicity, class, religion, socioeconomic standing, political affiliation, age, parental status, immigration status, or length of time in Canada. It is noteworthy that with the exception of Urracá, participants did not self-identify their class locations. Instead, class identities were implied through contextual references such as their parents' work experiences or parents' education.

The recruitment poster (see Appendix C. Recruitment Poster), was distributed through three different strategies. Posters were displayed at post-secondary institutions in two Southern Ontario urban areas where Latin American immigrant peoples reside. Additionally, paper and digital versions of the poster were distributed through non-profit networks in the two cities. Finally, circulation through social media was an effective strategy to reach potential participants. Recruitment of new participants continued until data saturation was evident within patterns of participants' experiences (Creswell, 2013). Fifteen participants were interviewed between January and April, 2017 and they are introduced later in this chapter. Several potential participants who did not meet the recruitment criteria were excluded from participation.

Participants were not recruited directly; instead, they were invited to initiate communication through any of three methods: email, text message, or phone. While most communicated via email, several participants communicated with text messages. Arrangements of when and where to meet were done through email and text message. Participants received appointment reminders about 24 hours prior to the meeting time. Only one interview had to be re-scheduled. The interviews took place in mutually agreed upon locations in several southern Ontario cities. Locations were quiet, semi-public locations such as university library rooms (Elvia, Urracá, Valentina), public library meeting rooms (Isabel, Liliana, Samara), and university classrooms (Myra, Luisa) and offices (Arianna, Benita, Isabel, Nicole, Sofia, Stella). Rosa was the first interviewee, and she wanted to meet at her home; as a Ph.D. student herself, this arrangement optimized her time. Despite the family noises that interfered with the audio recording, meeting in her home provided further insight into Rosa's student experiences.

Each participant received a \$20 VISA card to respect participants' busy lives (Wiles, 2012) and appreciate their contributions to the study and my academic career, rather than to incentivize or reward participation (Brooks, te Riele, & Maguire, 2014; Farrimond, 2013). The dollar amount was high enough to demonstrate respect for the participants and to ensure that no one was precluded from participation or disadvantaged financially due to participation (Canadian Institutes, 2014), while low enough to ensure it was not an incentive for participation. Only Valentina openly considered declining the gift card, and she expressed concern about the financial impact of taking it, on me. After reassuring her that the gift card was my gesture of appreciation, she gracefully accepted.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

Originally, I expected a simple linear progression of analysis beginning with interview transcription, followed by data-driven open coding (Creswell, 2013; Saldaña, 2016), and concluding with thematic coding (Saldaña, 2016) pre-established according to the MMI. However, data analysis was far more complex than anticipated; instead, early findings indicated the necessity of iterative data analysis processes. Memoing documented practices, questions, and reflections (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014), and such processing was instrumental to data analysis, which became iterative and systematic

(Creswell, 2013) after the first data collection session (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Data analysis processes are detailed below, beginning with transcription and followed by data interpretation, which includes data coding sessions with the MMI framework.

### 3.4.1 Transcription.

Since effective data analysis requires immersion in the data (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2015), each interview audio recording was reviewed three to four times prior to transcription. Subsequently, during transcription—the pre-coding data analysis processes (Bird, 2005; Kowal & O’Connell, 2014) that transform audio-recorded data into written text data—the audio files were engaged multiple times. First, written texts were drafted, and then texts were corrected for errors and annotated for intonation, pauses, and emphasis (Kowal & O’Connell, 2014). Spoken dialogue differs from written conversation, and cannot be transcribed without errors (Bucholtz, 2000; Kowal & O’Connell, 2014). Thus, transcript editing is an analysis and interpretation process that involves privileged decision-making, which influences how participants are represented in the text. Therefore, purposeful editing (Kowal & O’Connell, 2014) facilitates readability (Kowal & O’Connell, 2014; Roulston, 2014) and analysis (Bucholtz, 2000), without affecting the power of participants’ words. For example, terms such as *ummm*, and *you know* were omitted when they were not significant to the content or understanding, while words were inserted sparingly and with brackets to facilitate clarity. The final listen to the audio data was to review texts for meaning. Throughout these processes, reflections and questions about the data and analysis were recorded.

However, there are no guarantees that the data heard, recorded, and transcribed represents participants’ intent (Hammersley, 2010), since transcription requires political and ethical decision-making about the interpretation (content) and representation (form) of participants’ words (Bird, 2005; Bucholtz, 2000; Hammersley, 2010). Such interpretation and representation decisions are significant points for the inclusion of researcher bias (Bucholtz, 2000; Hammersley, 2010; Kowal & O’Connell, 2014), since these processes are situated in researcher contexts that include knowledge, culture, assumptions, and use of language (Bird, 2005, p. 228). Such contexts challenge researcher ability to understand

participants' words, to interpret the data as participants intended, and to represent participants as they would want to be represented. Therefore, I sought to represent participants with care and I was reflexive about my impact on the transcription process. For example, written text cannot replace participants' voices—the nuances of participants' identities and experiences were missing from the coding process when I read transcripts with my voice. As such, during some coding events the audio data was accessed to restore connections with participants and their experiences. Furthermore, participants were invited to review their transcripts and to provide feedback. Although more than half of the participants requested and received their transcripts, none returned feedback. Nevertheless, *no response* does not indicate transcript accuracy or participants' approval. Therefore, to interpret and represent participants with credibility and dependability, I transcribed carefully, edited sparingly, and reviewed transcripts against the audio recording to compare for accuracy.

### 3.4.2 Data interpretation.

Manual data coding and analysis began with reading through all of the transcripts, and the memos, journals, and notes that documented participants' interview processes. The purpose was to gain a general sense of the data, to increase familiarity with the overall data, and to stimulate questions, coding ideas, and reflections about emerging patterns (Creswell, 2013). Filled with anticipation, I launched inductive open coding, with the intent to conclude with deductive coding using themes from the MMI. However, disorder followed, caused by the overwhelming sense of drowning in data. The first open coding event did not reveal an interconnected web of participants' intersecting commonalities. Instead, coding produced refraction and dispersal, which served to isolate participants and emphasize their differences. Furthermore, the open coding revealed the intricacies of social identities in depth but produced limited insight into power structures. This omission was unacceptable, particularly since analysis of power structures was one of the reasons for engaging the MMI, since such analysis provides greater in-depth understanding of social identities (Cho et al., 2013; Dill & Zambrana, 2009; Hill Collins, 2009; May, 2014; Mohanty, 2003), and the interconnections between individual identities and structural powers (Davis, 2008).

Frustrated by the challenges presented by data analysis, I concluded that the open coding had not focused enough attention on power relationships, which were unlooked for and thus undiscovered. At the risk of abandoning open coding before it had been applied effectively, I flipped the order of data analysis methods, and conducted deductive thematic analysis that engaged themes pre-determined by the MMI, followed by inductive open coding within the themes. The improvement was evident from the first interview re-analyzed. The process then involved coding decisions that included issues of power relationships (Saldaña, 2016)—an essential element of the MMI—and revealed intersections within and between the three levels of the Model, as well as intracategorical (McCall, 2005) variability. Since application of the MMI is an important contribution of this study, engagement with the Model is detailed throughout this discussion of data analysis processes.

***Intersectional data analysis.*** With the MMI, deductive coding began with themes according to the levels of Social Identities, Domains of Power, and Historicity. However, return to the literature was necessary when it became evident that my understanding of the levels needed reinforcement. The primary level of the Model is Social Identities, which in this study includes race, ethnicity, gender, class, and transnationality, the Social Identities found to be relevant to most study participants (Yuval-Davis, 2011b). Initially, transcripts were coded for themes of race, ethnicity, class, and gender. Once it became evident that transnationality was a significant Social Identity theme for several participants including Elena, Benita, and Isabel, transcripts were re-coded for transnationality. Other Social Identities were relevant for only one or two participants—Rosa and Samara found religious identity important, for example—therefore, such identities were discounted for further analysis.

The Domains of Power level of the MMI involves Organizational, Representational, Intersubjective, and Experiential domains (Núñez, 2014a, 2014b). Coding for these themes revealed nuanced power relationships that were limited in earlier coding efforts. The process of fully engaging these Domains became iterative, whereby thematic coding began within the Organization Domain, while moving onto the next theme meant revision of understanding, and then re-coding the data already coded. Typically, this occurred

when data seemed to belong in several themes, prompting a return to Núñez (2014a, 2014b) to ensure thematic boundaries were applied according to the Model. Here, discussion of the processes undertaken to work through engagement with the MMI Domains of Power focuses on participants' parents specifically, since they are a significant factor in participants' educational persistence. The iterative data analysis processes unveiled the significance and complexity of the role of parents in participants' educational persistence. Initially, all family interactions were coded as Intersubjective power relations, but that Domain did not account for the complexity of family relationships, such as institutionalized family structures that included expectations about education, or parents' influence(s) on participants' motivation. To analyze the role of parents more effectively, understanding of all Domains of Power in the context of participants' families was reassessed.

*Organizational Domain.* One of the more challenging aspects to conceptualize for the purposes of this study, Organizational Domain addresses social structures that influence participants' educational persistence. Núñez (2014a, 2014b) develops this domain from Anthias (2013a), who explained the Organizational/structural position that, "focuses on how population categories are organised within institutional frameworks, e.g. family structures and networks, educational systems, political and legal systems" (p. 11). As such, the conclusion was made to recognize family as an Organizational space. An example of data re-coded from Intersubjective to Organizational comes from parents' homework monitoring. The Intersubjective Domain refers to the power relationship interactions between parent and daughter, when the parent insists that homework is completed, while the Organizational Domain refers to the family's practice that teenage daughters remain home on weeknights to complete homework.

*Representational Domain.* Perhaps contrary to common understanding, Representational does not refer to power relationships with representatives of organizations, such as teachers of schools. In fact, such relationships belong in the Intersubjective Domain of Power. Representational Domain addresses discursive practices that influence organizations and individuals. Examples of Representational power relationships in families are found in gender role stereotypes that address women's role in the family,

such as those discussed by Benita about Quinceañera, and Valentina about “MMC”, which are considered in Chapter 4.

*Intersubjective Domain.* In the context of this study, the Intersubjective Domain refers to interpersonal interactions that influenced participants’ persistence, which includes participants’ interactions with educators, family, and peers. Reflexive coding led to the realization that thematically coding all references to family within the Intersubjective Domain of Power creates a unidimensional perspective of family power relationships, necessitating a review of thematic coding and the transfer of family relationship data to other Domains.

*Experiential Domain.* The Experiential Domain of Power refers specifically to participants’ experiences and prioritizes participants. In this study, Experiential Domain refers to participants’ educational persistence. For example, families influence educational persistence; participants’ educational aspirations were influenced by parents’ expectations. This example overlaps the Intersubjective and Experiential Domains, since it involves the (power) relationship between parent and child, and also participants’ development of education aspirations.

Finally, Historicity is the intersectionality Model’s tertiary level, which analyses historical, social, spatial, and temporal contexts. Originally, Historicity was interpreted as participants’ background and contextual information, which are important data in case study research (Stake, 1995), and relevant to this study. However, Historicity also identifies systemic and temporal contexts. Thus, in the situation of participants’ families, Historicity identifies systemic contexts such as the push/pull factors of family immigration (immigration systems and processes), manifestation of class location in Canadian society (economics), and the marginalization of Latin American students in Canada’s education system. As Historicity was re-coded, it became evident that interview questions prioritized individual and institutional influences, which produced limited understanding of systemic issues. Consequently, while Historicity was thematically coded and is present in the study, its presence is not as robust as perhaps it could have



been, which is a limitation of this study. This limitation is discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

It was not until data analysis engaged the MMI themes that I re-examined, reassessed, and deepened my understanding of the Model. Return to the Model improved my efficacy with the Model and helped to ensure that data analysis was more likely to characterize the Model. Throughout, and although it seemed a prolonged process, this endeavour facilitated development of my data analysis skills. For example, in situations of theme ambiguity or if data did not address research questions, data was re-coded. Consequently, re-coding disqualified and removed data that was irrelevant to participants' persistence in education, including anecdotes by Arianna, Elena, and Valentina about their respective extended families, which provided interesting background information, although of limited study relevance. While it was difficult to exclude data, this process produced more clarity and enabled better focus and attention to details relevant to the research questions and the Model. Ultimately, the MMI provided a conceptual framework and analytical categories to process data.

The examination of thematic code definitions was productive, albeit sometimes disheartening since it required returning to recode thematically, multiple times. For example, Benita's extensive discussion about gender revealed complex intersections between Social Identities and Organizational, Representational, Intersubjective, and Experiential Domains of Power. This wealth of data raises the question whether the depth and breadth of such complex power relationships would have been discovered without iterative processing. Finally, it is almost a relief to report that there were times of satisfaction during thematic coding, when data clearly aligned with themes. For example, during re-analysis of Isabel's experiences with guidance counsellors, the transfer of her discussion from Organizational to Intersubjective Domains of Power was almost intuitive. Thus, it was rewarding to experience effective coding processes. These processes provide insight into application of the Model, one important element of this study's value and study's contributions.

***Open-coding revisited.*** The next step involved inductive open coding within the MMI themes, by coding for Social Identities, then organizing codes, and summarizing data. Major topics were identified for analysis within each of the three levels, and also nuances, subtleties, and contradictions, which were important to consider. Anxious to start writing up the findings, I began to write within the themes of Social Identities, and perhaps like many novice scholars, wrote in too much detail and depth. The result was extensive data and relevant analysis about Social Identities, but limited engagement with the Domains of Power and limited interconnections between the two levels. Furthermore, the data and discussions were aligned closely with the MMI, which was gratifying in one sense, but in another sense, seemed contrived, determined by researcher needs instead of participants' experiences.

The solution? Return to the data. I began again with open coding, and then engaged some of the practical strategies developed throughout the process, which enabled me to manage the large amount of data more efficiently and effectively than my first attempts. I poured over the transcripts, and coded all of the data again, this time recording codes onto sticky notes. These were organized and sorted, and sorted again, and codes were moved around a large whiteboard. The board itself facilitated a physical, even visceral process of data analysis, as I stood at the board to engage colour coding, venn mapping, and data summary tables on the board. Patterns and commonalities formed relevant groupings and themes, and then established organizational structures, while I reflected on and questioned the data produced. Perhaps significantly, engagement with the Model was relevant and effective; unlike the two earlier coding events where Model engagement was either negligible or overbearing. This third coding event was far more successful; authentically, the codes prioritized study participants, and addressed the research questions *and* the MMI themes. The data coding stage of data analysis was tedious, repetitive, and time consuming. It forced me to be patient, reflexive, and fully immerse in the data. The final data analysis stage came almost as a relief, when I launched writing in earnest.

### 3.5 Introduction to Participants

Since this is qualitative case study research, it is important to provide the reader with in-depth insight into the 15 study participants, beginning with participants' background information summarized in Table 3.1, followed by brief profiles about each of the participants. Throughout Chapters 4-6, participants' own words present their perspectives about their experiences. They speak for themselves, which prioritizes participants and their experiences. Furthermore, multiple participants' perspectives are included in discussions. Sometimes participants have similar positions, sometimes there is a breadth of perspectives—which is an intracategorical (McCall, 2005) approach—and sometimes alternative positions, outliers, or negative instances contribute further understanding of issues and themes. For example, as will be addressed in Chapter 4, Mayra was an outlier within this case; she exerted considerable effort to transform her identity to assimilate into her white friend group, which was an effort not revealed by other participants.

#### 3.5.1 Participants' background details.

Table 3.1 presents participants' background information according to their family origins, immigration histories, languages spoken, education details, social class experiences, and aspirations.

Table 3.1. Participants' Background Information

Name	Family Origins	Immigration History & Languages Spoken <sup>a</sup>	Education (working on and completed)	Social Class Experiences	Aspirations
<b>Arianna</b>	Peru	Teen arrival in BC. Born in Peru. Lived in Argentina, Colombia, China. (Sp., Eng.)	BFA, Honours – Photography  Private K-12 schooling prior to university.	Family was working class. Upward class mobility. Parents paid for university. worked during PSE.	Artist. Possibly a Masters degree, after a few years of work in her field.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Family Origins</b>	<b>Immigration History &amp; Languages Spoken<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Education (working on and completed)</b>	<b>Social Class Experiences</b>	<b>Aspirations</b>
<b>Benita</b>	El Salvador	Arrived at 10 years. Followed father to Ontario after Mother died. Born in El Salvador. (Sp., Eng.)	Ph.D. in Education. Masters B.A. at night/online. Challenged gendered cultural norms, to attend PSE. Catholic education.	Working class. Upward class mobility from her education and work.  Worked throughout PSE.	A career that is commensurate with her level of education.
<b>Elena</b>	Ecuador	Parents immigrated. Second generation, born in Ontario. (Sp., Eng.)	BA – Spanish/Culture Switched from Health Sciences. Catholic education. ESL programming.	Lower middle class. Worked during high school and university. Student loans. First PSE student in her family.	Health-care interpreter. Possibly a Masters in conferencing and interpreting.
<b>Elvia</b>	Colombia	Arrived in Ontario at 8 years old, after 5 years undocumented in the U.S. Born in Colombia. (Sp., Eng.)	BA – Sociology & Communications. Switched from BScN.	Working class. Worked throughout HS & PSE.  Time off university to work.	Complete her degree.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Family Origins</b>	<b>Immigration History &amp; Languages Spoken<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Education (working on and completed)</b>	<b>Social Class Experiences</b>	<b>Aspirations</b>
<b>Isabel</b>	Colombia	Arrived in Quebec at 6 years old. Born in Colombia. Moved to Ontario at 15. (Sp., Fr., Eng.)	Diploma – Business Marketing Switched out of high school ESL support. Catholic education.	Middle class in Colombia, where parents were professionals. Returned to middle-class after immigration adjustment.	Finish marketing degree. Travel.
<b>Liliana</b>	Colombia	Arrived as a teen in Ontario. Born in Colombia. (Sp., Eng., Fr.)	BA – French, Switched from Health Sciences. Began high school with no English skills, completed in 4 years, with no ESL support. Catholic education.	Middle-class in Colombia, where parents were professionals. Regained middle class position. Worked during HS & PSE.	Continue to take courses that further her career.
<b>Luisa</b>	Colombia	Arrived in Ontario at 7 years old. Born in Colombia. (Sp., Eng., Fr.)	BA – Nutrition & Families Added French. Completed alternative high school credits. Catholic education. ESL in elementary school.	Lower middle class. Parents were professionals in Colombia. Slowly re-gained middle-class position.	Finish her degree. Complete B.Ed. Get a job immediately, to support her son.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Family Origins</b>	<b>Immigration History &amp; Languages Spoken<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Education (working on and completed)</b>	<b>Social Class Experiences</b>	<b>Aspirations</b>
<b>Mayra</b>	El Salvador/ Philippines	Parents immigrated. Second generation, born in Ontario. (Eng., Sp., Fr.)	BSc/B.Ed., French. Child Life Specialist. Catholic education.	Lower middle class. Parents paid for university. Worked to afford additional PSE program of study.	Child Life Specialist in a hospital.
<b>Nicole</b>	Chile/ Italy	Parents immigrated. Second generation, born in Ontario. (Eng., Fr.) (It. & Sp. understood)	B.Ed. BA – French. Catholic education.	Lower middle class. Parents gained middle class position from working class origins.	Teacher. Support her parents in their retirement.
<b>Rosa</b>	Peru	Arrived in Ontario at 5 years old. Born in Peru. (Sp., Eng.)	PhD – Practical Theology	Working class growing up. Lower middle class with her own family. Worked during PSE.	University academic position, in her field of Theology.
<b>Samara</b>	Nicaragua	Parents immigrated. Second generation, born in Ontario. (Sp., Eng.)	BSc Nursing Catholic education. ESL programming.	Parents were working class, gained middle class lifestyle.	Perhaps a Master's in Nursing.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Family Origins</b>	<b>Immigration History &amp; Languages Spoken<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Education (working on and completed)</b>	<b>Social Class Experiences</b>	<b>Aspirations</b>
<b>Sofia</b>	El Salvador	Parents immigrated. Second generation, born in Ontario. (Sp., Eng.)	BA – Human Rights/Equity studies, English minor. Catholic education.	Working class. Seeks middle class. Fear of poverty. Worked during HS & PSE.	Lawyer, with a focus on human rights. Save money before law school.
<b>Stella</b>	Colombia	Arrived in Ontario at 8 years old. Born in Colombia. (Sp., Eng.)	BA – Architecture Catholic education. HS International Baccalaureate, dropped in grade 12. ESL student.	Middle class. Parents were professionals in Colombia. Regained middle class position. Worked during PSE.	Architect.
<b>Urracá</b>	Panama	Arrived in Quebec at 3 years old. Born in Panama. Moved to Ontario as a young adolescent. (Sp., Fr., Eng.)	MA – Political Science/Gender Studies.	Working poor. Parents divorced, mother worked multiple minimum wage, temp jobs, & also social assistance. Three children worked to support family. Student responsibilities challenged by work responsibilities.	Perhaps a Ph.D., with a focus on social justice and equity issues.

Name	Family Origins	Immigration History & Languages Spoken <sup>a</sup>	Education (working on and completed)	Social Class Experiences	Aspirations
<b>Valentina</b>	Colombia	Arrived in Ontario as a teen. Born in Guatemala. Lived in Brazil, Mexico, U.S. (Sp., Eng.)	BSc – Health Sciences. Private schooling prior to high school. Catholic education.	Upper middle class. Professional, educated parents. Parents paid for university. Worked during PSE.	Finish her degree. Take a break from education for a while.

Note. Participants' background information includes languages spoken.

<sup>a</sup> Sp. = Spanish, Fr. = French, Eng. = English, It. = Italian.

### 3.5.2 Participants' profiles.

The brief profiles below lift the curtain on participants' personalities, values, and perspectives—the individual identities of the participants—and further contextualize the findings that follow in the next three chapters.

**Arianna.** At the beginning of her first undergraduate year, she arrived at her southern Ontario university sight unseen. It was her choice to study far away from home. Arianna intended to gain independence from her supportive, close-knit family, yet she also came to realize how much she values her ethnic identity, and how her family relationships influence retention of that identity. Arianna spoke almost wistfully of her late-night long-distance chats with her mother, which are a throwback to that time in her life when her mother packed the three sisters into their van for long evenings of after-school competitive swim events. At university, Arianna held monthly Peruvian cooking events in her shared, off-campus apartment, which was one strategy to engage some of her longed-for cultural touchpoints.

Arianna seizes on new opportunities, which seemingly contradicts her shy personality. An artist—a photographer—Arianna mustered the courage to attend public art viewings knowing that such social interactions were a necessary component of her academic



program. This determination to reach her potential is evident in her planning and organization strategies. Arianna's life experiences include learning English at her private international school in China, although she learned little of the languages spoken in China while there.

**Benita.** Benita unconsciously rubbed her swollen belly as she talked in a rapid, endless stream, and traveled effortlessly from one topic to the next. Benita began our interview by matter-of-factly explaining that she carried the child growing within her for another woman who could not. This rare, generous gift exemplifies Benita's commitment to family. Benita is a vibrant woman, strong, yet with a vulnerability just below the surface that hints at the difficult challenges she has overcome. Throughout our interview, she revealed little about the trauma of her arrival in Canada at ten years old with her younger sister. They re-united with her widowed working-class father, unseen for years after he escaped to Canada to avoid war. Later, after he forced her to leave home, Benita became pregnant before she completed high school. Benita's search for independence challenged the gender roles in her culture, and thus her marriage to the father of her two younger children failed, in part because Benita wanted to improve herself through work and education.

A tenacious advocate for her children, Benita feels empowered to challenge the injustices they experience. They in turn help keep her motivated to reach her own educational goals. Benita anticipated that all three children will enter post-secondary education straight out of high school, and she is fiercely proud!

**Elena.** Elena was tired. She could not wait to finish her degree, an arduous journey she had wanted to quit several times. She did take a break from her studies, a break that was so long her parents worried she would not return to university. Yet after each difficult setback she picked herself back up, pushed herself, and continued toward her degree completion. With the end of her undergraduate studies finally in sight, Elena was amazed that she was considering her options for a Masters degree. In some ways, another degree was the last thing she wanted to do next. Yet, the pride in her father's voice when he

realized the possibility that his daughter would be the first in the family to earn a graduate degree, spurred her to consider it.

Elena was animated when she discussed issues of power and identity in the context of her Spanish classes. She realized that in those classes at least, power relationships flipped; she possessed the knowledge and the power, while the many white/Canadian students in these classes struggled. It was a heady feeling. Elena is proud of her identity and expressed frustration at white people for co-opting her culture and heritage.

***Elvia.*** Elvia's disposition of quiet dignity and strength caused me wonder how much of her demeanor was a result of the "pressures of carrying" her family's "sacrifices or struggles". Her parents treated her "as an equal"; they did not hide their challenges from Elvia and her siblings. That awareness has inspired her to "make it better for them". At times that meant working to contribute to the family's economic survival, while at other times Elvia sought to protect and emotionally support her parents. Elvia felt a great deal of responsibility for her family, to be strong for them while not contributing further to their burdens. However, she resented her older brother for leaving such responsibilities solely on her shoulders.

The family's financial hardships left Elvia to finance her post-secondary schooling herself, which hampered the progression of her studies. With her mother's encouragement, Elvia took time away from her studies to work. While her unsuccessful balancing of school and work caused Elvia considerable distress, she expressed confidence in her ability to reach her education goals.

***Isabel.*** Isabel passionately banged the table for emphasis as she discussed her parents' sacrifices and achievements. They were educators in Colombia but were required to re-train in Canada. Isabel was angry at the Canadian education system. In addition to the lack of recognition for her parents' credentials, she has no patience for ESL programming, which in her experience excluded students from the "normal" classes, and impeded integration with the "white culture", the "Canadian culture". As she expressed her frustration, Isabel again banged on the table for effect.

Outgoing and adventurous, Isabel enjoys getting involved. Isabel appreciates that Canada has so many opportunities to offer, and she takes advantage of them. She is approachable, and gets along well with others, including her multiple groups of friends. Isabel enjoyed a close caring relationship with her parents, who had instilled values of honour and respect. Isabel is also adaptable, whether with people, or different contexts. A confident person who enjoys her life, Isabel recognizes her ability to embrace challenges without being afraid to fail.

**Liliana.** With an undercurrent of strength, Liliana presents as an experienced, confident, and professional person; characteristics she exemplified when she matter-of-factly recounted her high school experiences. She was driven to do well and self-motivated to succeed, despite the challenges of high school learning without English language learning supports. Liliana is someone who seeks success and works hard with persistence until she has achieved her goals. Furthermore, Liliana is passionate about issues that challenge her moral compass. For example, she expressed frustration with the Canadian education system, which she perceived as less rigorous than Colombian education. Liliana seemed to mock the Canadian education system for not allowing students to fail, and instead accommodated multiple attempts at completion.

Highly organized, Liliana seeks out and enjoys opportunities to better herself. Self-identified as a “citizen of the world”, Liliana is respected by others and values the support of her close-knit family. Perhaps most importantly, she sees the good in people.

**Luisa.** Luisa seemed anxious when we met; she was physically restless and spoke rapidly. Luisa discussed her life earnestly and passionately, without dwelling on the lasting impact of the hardships she had experienced. During the challenges of young parenthood, she lost her university scholarship. Yet Luisa took events in stride, not recognizing the academic cost of her life stressors until her marks began to rise during her second year. She was excited to realize her academic potential again. Luisa recognized that “adversity made [her] more resilient”, able to withstand new challenges. Luisa’s resilience also involved flexibility; she seemed to adapt despite the difficulties.

Luisa is community- and service-oriented, and she enjoys working with others. She expressed concern for others, and she seemed eager to please. Louisa holds onto her convictions while seeking her own independence, although the uncertainties of life make Luisa nervous. She worries about her financial security, and strategically developed her educational plans to ensure employment shortly after finishing her post-secondary education.

**Mayra.** Although her heart was set on becoming a doctor, early in her degree Mayra discovered that to get into medicine she should have taken a different program of study. Furthermore, when we met, Mayra expressed guilt that she had not yet admitted to her parents that she failed a first-year university course and then lied to them so that she could redo courses during the summer. However, Mayra is like that punching doll that will not stay down. When Mayra experiences challenges, she re-evaluates and develops another Plan B.

Her acceptance into the Bachelor of Education program tempered Mayra's own disappointment about the missed opportunities of a medical degree, but her father's disappointment was ongoing. At the end of her B.Ed. program, he was just coming to terms with the fact that although highly educated and bound for a lucrative teaching career if she chose, his daughter would not be wearing a doctor's white coat. Although he seemed more concerned about her financial security than the prestige. Nevertheless, by the time she had finished her B.Ed. studies, Mayra had already moved through the training for a Child Life Specialist career, which combines medicine and education. Although evidently hard working, and eternally optimistic, Mayra seemed uncertain about her future path.

**Nicole.** Proud of her academic accomplishments, Nicole met her goals to earn her B.A. and B.Ed. at her preferred university. Nicole set out to quell the naysayers, who predicted that she would not survive university when so far away from her parents, which is why she was anxious to prove that she could succeed on her own. The first year was difficult, especially when she wound up in hospital during the winter, and her parents could not travel to visit. Nicole was almost finished with her studies when we met and anticipating

the upcoming rounds of teacher hiring. She expressed reserved excitement about her future career path as a teacher.

Nicole confided that once she has a job she would be content—able to provide for her parents in their retirement. As an only child, she is the only one to worry about them, and she worries about her dad in particular. He has worked hard all his life and made many sacrifices. Nicole gets angry at the racial abuse he endures and when people complain about his thick accent. Her calm demeanor masks her inner strength and fierce convictions of right and wrong.

**Rosa.** The eldest of the study participants, Rosa was the first interviewee. I believe she sensed my nervousness, because she accommodated my awkwardness with her kindness. Much of our interview seemed like a peer-to-peer conversation, since she too was working on her Ph.D. at that time. Although she did not discuss the specific details of her Christian faith, Rosa inserted different aspects of her Church community into our conversation, which contextualized her discussion without proselytization. Her Church was an important factor in her life, involvement in her Church brought Rosa back to education, first through informal theological study, and then later through her post-secondary studies. Additionally, Rosa relied on the support of her mentor, a member of her Church.

Throughout Rosa's non-traditional educational path, necessity has encouraged Rosa to be a self-directed, independent student. For many years Rosa juggled family, work, and education. As a mother of three, Rosa persisted with her own education while supporting her children's accomplishments. Moreover, Rosa openly acknowledged several experiences with racism that occurred throughout her own and her children's education. Regardless of such challenges, she enjoyed being a PSE student.

**Samara.** With obvious excitement, Samara talked about her upcoming wedding in Nicaragua, to her Colombian fiancé, whom she had met through their Spanish-speaking Church community in their southern Ontario city. The immigration challenges her fiancé and his family experienced only a few years prior, provided Samara with insight into her own parents' immigration experiences before she was born. Their close-knit family was

full of love; for example, when Samara competed in a singing competition in a neighbouring city, they all attended to cheer her on. Despite the financial challenges of their early years in Canada and prior to their much-anticipated return to Nicaragua, Samara's parents had purchased their own home while they supported their three daughters through PSE. In her adulthood, Samara continued to live as her parents had guided her. She is highly involved with her local church's community—the only Spanish Catholic church in the area. Samara sang in the choir and volunteered with the youth group.

Two months after our interview, Samara and her sisters would fly to Nicaragua and see her parents for the first time in two years. Although they communicate almost every day, it was not nearly as satisfying as day-to-day living under the same roof. Samara could hardly wait to see them. And get married!

***Sofia.*** Sofia was disarmingly candid during our interview, even blunt. She spoke freely about her life and her aspirations. Sofia is a high-energy person, who juggled several part-time jobs along with her schooling. She also seems confident, sure of herself and what she wants and needs, with flair and vibrancy.

Sofia expressed frustration that others perceive her as young and not academically talented. Admittedly, Sofia does leave an impression of being youthful, and perhaps even naïve. Sofia is proud of her accomplishments and her successes in overcoming personal and familial challenges. She and her mother have lived in poverty, while life with her stepfather has been dysfunctional. Sofia waivers between contempt for her mother and respect for her mother's own persistence despite adversity. Furthermore, Sofia expressed embarrassment about her home and her family while she projected culture and sophistication through her expensive taste for big houses and fast cars. Family experiences have influenced Sofia's caution about starting her own family until she is "financially stable enough". Such experiences have also enabled Sofia to be independent and resourceful. Smart and ambitious, Sofia intends to achieve her goal of becoming a lawyer. Sofia's self-awareness meant she believed that she would not be ready for law

school after completing her undergraduate degree, and therefore she planned to train as a legal assistant first, for financial and pedagogical reasons.

***Stella.*** Stella was reserved during our interview, and it was difficult to gain insight into her personality. She spoke of being shy in elementary school. Although she attended ESL programming, Stella felt frightened at school, in part since she was bullied for her accent. In adulthood, Stella seemed confident and professional, and was particularly animated when she aired her frustrations with others' stereotypical perceptions and assumptions about Colombians and about Latinas.

Although she is not competitive, Stella considers herself an academic person, focused and hard working. As a student, she was planned, even cautious, yet highly motivated and resilient. Stella enjoys academic challenges such as those provided in her International Baccalaureate (IB) program. Yet IB was highly stressful since she pressured herself to be highly accomplished, and she dropped out of IB. Stella came to appreciate the IB experience when she realized IB helped her to be well prepared for the rigors of her university degree.

Stella values her family and their influence. Her family played an important role through all aspects of her life, including in her education. Her family values education and all family members are highly educated. Furthermore, Stella's family believes in her and support her educational efforts. Stella's parents encouraged her to be independent, which helped her at university to be "self-driven". Nevertheless, Stella anticipates reliance on their support as she continues her journey to becoming an architect.

***Urracá.*** Urracá almost overwhelmed me with her passion for social justice issues and her knowledge of life and learning, yet she seemed unaware of her own powerful presence. I could not keep up. We talked for more than two hours, and I wished we could have spent the day.

Urracá worried about the race issues that sometimes complicate her marriage to her white Canadian husband. Together, they work to understand the intersections of race, class, and gender issues between them. And with foresight, Urracá anticipates raising children with

the challenges that will arise from bi-racial identities. Urracá's passionate attention to social justice provides her with some reassurance that she can deal with anything.

She is the first in her family to attend higher education. While her elder brother and sister did not have such opportunities when they were younger, Urracá encourages them to restart their education. They speak bitterly with their mother for not supporting their education, little realizing that she did not have the wherewithal to do so. Notwithstanding her limited English, Urracá's mother has since earned a university degree in French. Urracá was considering a Ph.D. degree when we met. However, Urracá's future progress may be hindered still, by the necessity to work.

**Valentina.** Valentina projected the persona of an entertainer with her quick, self-deprecating wit. I wondered whether she sought fast laughs to prevent me from asking difficult questions. She joked around about her struggles, about deciding not to become the doctor she had planned to be, that she had told everyone she would be. Yet the pain of her lost dreams seemed to linger in the hint of sadness when she paused. Although she struggled to get out of bed many days, Valentina rejected her doctor's diagnoses of stress, anxiety, or depression. The youngest of three highly educated siblings, Valentina began our conversation by forcefully expressing disgust with her father, who was in the process of divorcing her mother. Valentina's mother, who worked in the home throughout the marriage, now has to fend for herself, and Valentina seemed to resent that she must work to support her own education. Her years in private schools lead me to expect an attitude of privilege. Yet Valentina is humble, down-to-earth, and generous with her time and with her experiences. After five years in undergrad studies, she was ready to graduate, to engage with endeavours outside of academia for a while.

I have introduced each of the 15 study participants individually to shed light on their personalities, backgrounds, and aspirations. Many of these details influence participants' educational persistence and will be discussed in the context of the study findings, which follow in Chapters 4 through 6.



## 3.6 Ethical Considerations

To respect and protect research participants, this research study followed all ethical standards and protocols designed to protect research participants, according to the policies and procedures established by the *Tri-Council Policy Statement for Ethical Conduct* (2014) and Western University's *Office of Research Ethics and Research Ethics Board* (See Appendix D. Ethics Approval notice). This study was supervised by Dr. Goli Rezai-Rashti, an accomplished researcher. Ethical considerations prioritized care and respect (Bell, 2014; Brooks, te Riele, & Maguire, 2014; Farrimond, 2013) for the human dignity of the research participants and focused particularly on informed voluntary consent and confidentiality.

### 3.6.1 Informed voluntary consent.

Participants were informed of the anticipated benefits and risks of study participation prior to their engagement in the study. The *Letter of Information* (LOI) and consent forms (see Appendix E: Letter of Information and Consent) followed Western University ethical standards and requirements. The LOI outlined the research purpose, procedures, potential benefits and risks, use of data, identity protection, and other information relevant to ensure informed consent. I carefully reviewed the LOI and consent forms with each participant for understanding, discussed interview processes and research procedures, and answered questions, prior to their signing. Additionally, I advised participants that they had the right to decline to answer or to withdraw consent at any time throughout the interview, or from participation at any time throughout the study (Wiles, 2012). Since consent is an on-going process (Brooks, teRiele, & Maguire, 2014; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011; Canadian Institutes, 2014; Wiles, 2012), researcher reflexivity ensured sensitivity to and vigilance of unexpected ethical issues (Brooks, teRiele, & Maguire, 2014; Hennink, 2014; Ibrahim, 2014; Wiles, 2012) and changes in consent (Wiles, 2012) throughout the research process. Participants were invited to review their interview transcripts at their convenience, either in person, by video conference, or by electronic communication, and to date, more than half requested and received their transcripts via email. In the future, participants will be offered copies of all documents and publications connected to this study, including this document.

Study participation was voluntary, with no coercion involved. The \$20 VISA card offered to participants prior to the start of interviews was intended to recognize and acknowledge the time and effort they invested into the research study (Wiles, 2012). This amount is neither life-changing (Brooks, teRiele, & Maguire, 2014) nor coercive, and is commensurate with other Western University studies that have offered participants compensation. Interviews were audio-recorded, and no participants declined to be recorded.

### 3.6.2 Confidentiality.

Participants' confidentiality and privacy is safeguarded (Farrimond, 2013) according to Western University protocols, and identifiable information has been anonymized (Wiles, 2012), including participants' names, post secondary education institutions, and locations. For several participants, minor details such as sibling's or children's names, ages, and gender were modified or removed to increase anonymity. In post-interview emails sent to thank participants for their study involvement, participants were invited to select their own pseudonyms for anonymity in study publications. Several participants requested that their own names represent them, which presented an ethical dilemma. While it is essential that participants have power in the decision-making that determines their representation in this research, my ethical responsibilities to participants are outlined by the ethical standards and protocols from the *Tri-Council Policy Statement for Ethical Conduct* and Western University's *Office of Research Ethics* and *Research Ethics Board*. Therefore, I acknowledged participants' preferences, declined with apologies, and referenced ethical standards.

A few participants left their pseudonym decisions to me, either directly by instructing me to choose a name for them, or indirectly by not responding to the invitation. This unexpected responsibility to create a label to represent participants introduced a challenging prospect in light of the complicated power relationships that may be found between researcher and researched, particularly considering my racial, ethnic, and class privilege. As such, my determination to assign culturally appropriate instead of anglicized pseudonyms, led to internet searches for names that are common in the countries where participants' families originated. Finally, several participants chose their

own pseudonyms. Urracá for example, explained the symbolism found in her pseudonym, stating that, “Urracá was an indigenous leader from Panama who fought the Spanish empire” (Urracá, personal communication, January 20, 2017). For Urracá, this name is deeply relevant to her own Panamanian and indigenous identity and represents her journey to discover this identity.

## 3.7 Issues of Trustworthiness and Limitations

Study trustworthiness is essential, and I have endeavoured to be transparent by employing researcher reflexivity throughout the study processes, some of which is discussed in this chapter. Additionally, some of the study limitations are acknowledged and addressed below. Note limitations connected to the MMI are included in Chapter 7.

### 3.7.1 Trustworthiness.

Maintenance of study trustworthiness is ongoing throughout the research process (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). For example, as critical feminist research, it is essential that study findings reflect participants’ voices (Hessie-Biber, 2014). As such, participants’ words are extensively and “judiciously” quoted (Hennink, 2014) in this document; participants speak for themselves. Moreover, as discussed in section 3.4.1, participants were invited to validate their interview transcripts, which contributes to research credibility (Creswell, 2013). Additionally, data was collected until saturation was reached. Elena was the final participant to be interviewed, and her interview contributed nuance and depth to the overall data already collected instead of introducing new data. This saturation establishes credibility to the consistency of the data from the multiple data collection points. Additionally, this chapter included extensive discussion of data collection and analysis methods, which provides insight into research processes and contributes to credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Data analysis processes positively influence trustworthiness, and researcher immersion in the data is one such strategy (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2015). The discussion in section 3.4 attests to researcher data immersion and contributes transparency about the research process, thereby supporting confirmability and dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As indicated in section 3.4, the multiple coding procedures also facilitated research

dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). However, researcher bias can threaten study trustworthiness (Maxwell, 2013; Merriam, 2009), and researcher reflexivity is one important strategy to temper bias (DeVault & Gross, 2012; Edwards & Holland, 2013; Hesse-Biber, 2014; Roulston, 2010) and facilitate dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Reflexivity enables the researcher to be aware of her biases and assumptions (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009), her role in the research process (Edwards & Holland, 2013), her impact on and relationship with participants (Edwards & Holland, 2013; Hesse-Biber, 2014), and her power over the data. Therefore, note taking, journaling, and memoing procedures document research processes and decisions, while reflections actively monitored biases and assumptions and supported understanding of the effects of researcher identity on the participants and the study.

### 3.7.2 Limitations.

Intersubjective limitations discussed here provide insight into participants' self identity and into relationships between researcher and researched. Participants self-selected their engagement with this study; they accessed recruitment materials—they identified with the messages located therein, including the conceptualization of “Latinas” (see Appendix A: Latin American Identity); and they responded to the call for participation. Yet there are (persistent) women in Canadian post-secondary education institutions who have Latin American origins and who did not identify with or respond to the call for participation. Thus, the findings here refer only to those who identified with the gender and ethnic implications of the terms in the recruitment materials, who responded, and who participated.

Furthermore, since this study is exploratory in nature, participants represent the heterogeneous diversity found within the Canadian population of peoples of Latin American origins. That diversity is evident in participants' countries of origin, family demographics, immigration experiences, identities, and post-secondary education, among other contexts. Moreover, findings from the study of unique participants cannot be generalized (Flyvbjerg, 2011) in a representative sense (Simons, 2009, Stake, 1995). Instead, the intent was to interpret what occurred in specific contexts, rather than to predict with certainty (Bassey, 1999), which is evident in later chapters. This study

provides a foundation of understanding from which to launch future research that could focus more depth on specific areas such as nationality (Lopez, 2003), class, and immigration experiences for example, which might in turn facilitate generalizability. Future research is addressed in more detail, in Chapter 7.

Vulnerable to participant bias, this study involves retrospective, self-reported experience (Maxwell, 2013; Rapley, 2012), and relies on participants' memories and interpretations of past experiences, which creates multiple spaces for biases. Furthermore, participants were approached with the understanding that they are experts of their own knowledge. Thus, participants' words are recognized as their interpretations of their experiences at the time of the interview, regardless of whether or not such interpretations were revisions of previous events. Consider for example, that every participant indicated that interview questions inspired her to reflect on previous experiences, which suggests the potential for dynamic temporal perceptions and understandings of participants' perspectives.

Alternative data collection methods such as observations or interviews with other actors such as parents or former teachers, which might alleviate some biases, would not produce the data required (Patton, 2015). This study relied on participants' perceptions—their understandings of their experiences and how they responded to the education system—therefore, interviews are a valuable method to obtain this knowledge (Grinyer & Thomas, 2012) from participants' memories and interpretations of their own experiences. Nevertheless, performative methods such as photo-voice or journal/blog may have captured some required data elements more effectively and creatively.

Another limitation is my position as the researcher, which is more than just the fact that I am an outsider, particularly since neither insider nor outsider status guarantees research trustworthiness (Hesse-Biber, 2014). Instead, it is my position of power as a privileged white Canadian woman who sought understanding of racialized women's experiences, and the presupposition that I could understand their experiences despite differences between us including cultural, ethnic, racial, class, and temporal differences. Throughout, I endeavoured to stay conscious of my power and not impose it on processes, findings, and other aspects of this study. Nevertheless, I recognize my position of power in these

proceedings. Furthermore, I engaged open, respectful care of participants and developed rapport and trust with the intent to temper researcher/ participant differences (Hesse-Biber, 2014; DeVault & Gross, 2012; Grinyer & Thomas, 2012). I cannot know for certain whether participants believed themselves respected. Perhaps more importantly, these power imbalances illustrate the necessity of including participants' words in the chapters that follow. Note that this discussion focused on limitations of method. Limitations of the study itself are addressed in Chapter 7.

### 3.8 Summary

This chapter defined the qualitative case study methodology and the implications of this case study approach. Next, the research design section outlined interview data collection methods and procedures. Data analysis followed. Due to the significance of employing the MMI, the account of the multi-stage data analysis processes was presented in detail. Introduction to the research participants provided insight into participants' personalities, backgrounds, and aspirations. Then, ethical considerations for this study included discussion of the strategies employed to ensure that the research conducted was ethical. Finally, issues of trustworthiness and study limitations concluded this chapter. The next chapter explores the implications of participants' immigration, education, family, and identity contexts.

## Chapter 4: History and Context: “*No desde aquí, no desde allí*. Not from here, not from there.” (Elvia)

I couldn't really relate very well to Canadian kids [in school]. But also, the Colombian kids didn't really *want* to be my friend. I don't know if it was a sense of, I was fluent in English, and I had grown up here. I don't know if it was a sense of resentment, but, I couldn't really quite fit in. There's a saying in Spanish and it's '*No desde aquí, no desde allí*. Not from here, not from there'. You're just stuck in the middle. (Elvia)

Elvia's powerful statement exposes her isolation at school. While she sought acceptance from Canadian and Colombian peers, Elvia found the relationship with her Colombian peers particularly challenging since they positioned her identity as a signifier (Hall, 1997a) of difference, and they created barriers that inhibited her integration. These experiences of identity were contextualized by immigration, family history, and peer relationships within education. Analysis reveals that all participants experienced dynamic, “not from here, not from there” situations.

### 4.1 Introduction

Elvia's recollection above alludes to many of the issues that participants explored in our interviews. Complex intersections of participants' diverse ethnic, racial, gender, and classed identities illuminated the diversity of identities between these participants. This chapter considers historical and contextual factors of participants' diverse experiences with immigration, education, family, and identity. In the context of immigration and education, participants prioritized issues of class locations; in the context of family, participants emphasized gender roles; and in the context of identity, they highlighted race and ethnicity. Therefore, this discussion illustrates participants' identity locations that are most relevant according to participants, and thus foregrounds or backgrounds (Shields, 2008) aspects of identity, depending on participants' priorities. This arrangement provides space for within-category diversity and contradictory locations (Anthias, 2013b), according to the intracategorical approach (McCall, 2005) to intersectionality. With this intersectional analysis, it is important to consider heterogeneity, dynamic

identities, and the intersections of social identities within Domains of Power and Historicity. Thus, intersectionality informs this analysis and maintains a conversation (Anyon, 2009) between findings and the empirical data. Additionally, this chapter considers the influence of familism upon many aspects and issues of participants' education. This Intracategorical analysis foregrounds some participants' discussions to illustrate some experiences in depth, and to illustrate differences between participants, rather than highlighting only the similarities of their experiences.

## 4.2 Immigration Contexts

Participants' immigration contexts were highly diverse, with a variety of origins, arrival locations, and situations. For example, the 15 participants had familial roots in Chile (1), Colombia (6), Ecuador (1), El Salvador (3), Nicaragua (1), Panama (1), Peru (2), the Philippines (1), and Italy (1). Note that Mayra and Nicole considered themselves Latin American, even though they were born in Ontario to immigrant parents, and each had a parent who was not of Latin American origins. The families of Elvia, Nicole, and Valentina dwelt in the U. S. before arriving in Canada, while their fathers' careers led Arianna's and Valentina's families to reside in several countries prior to their Canadian arrivals. Participants settled in British Columbia, Ontario, and Quebec; three as teenagers and seven as children, while five were born in Ontario to immigrant parents. Immigration contextualizes multiple aspects of participants' Canadian, familial, and educational circumstances.

Most participants indicated that their parents immigrated to Canada to develop better opportunities for themselves and their families (Espinoza, 2010). Consider that some of the participants' families came to Canada to escape political and economic conditions. For example, Sofia's parents were politically active civil war refugees from El Salvador, while the hardships during the Pinochet regime encouraged Nicole's father to leave Chile. Prior to their migration to Canada, Elvia's family was undocumented in the U.S., for which her father was imprisoned. Extended family influenced some migration decisions; Samara recounted that her family left war-torn Nicaragua for Canada because they had extended family living in Canada. Interestingly, Valentina confided that her



family chose Canada because her mother fell in love with Canada during a visit, decades before.

Participants' immigration trajectories were dominated by dynamic issues of social class locations. Several families experienced poverty during their immigration processes, for example. Some participants' families brought few material goods with them, some were unable to find employment in their fields of expertise, and some laboured to adapt to the unfamiliarity of Canada. Consider Elvia's parents, who were middle class in Colombia, yet they struggled to access comparable Canadian employment, and faced economic instability as a result. Urracá's family endured chronic economic instability in Canada, which resulted in all three children working to financially contribute to the family as soon as they were of age. However, with the exception of Urracá who spoke of being "poor, super poor", participants did not discuss their own experiences in terms of class per se, although some such as Stella and Valentina spoke of others' classed identities. Instead, participants referred to their immigration-related experiences of poverty with terms such as "had nothing", "started from scratch", and "gave up everything".

Some families escaped poverty following immigration. Samara indicated that her parents "started from scratch" when they arrived in Toronto, and worked hourly-waged, labour-intensive shift jobs. Despite the challenges of working-class labour, by the time they returned to Nicaragua her parents lived a middle-class lifestyle. As Samara exclaimed, "We had nothing! But we were so happy, and we are still a really strong family." Samara seemed to suggest that family hardships helped them to forge strong family bonds. Meanwhile, some families regained economic stability following immigration-related poverty. Stella recalled that her family reclaimed their middle-class location after a brief, post-immigration adjustment period. Luisa too, recognized that her family, "literally started from the bottom. When my parents started, my mom was cleaning people's houses, and my dad was painting. So, definitely starting from scratch. It was difficult. We've come a long way from there." Indeed, Stella and Luisa understood that immigration impacted their economic circumstances, since their families started over in Canada before they re-established their middle-class lifestyles that included university attendance by the family's children. Not all participants' families struggled economically

to adapt in Canada. For Valentina, immigration brought little economic disruption to her lifestyle. Immigration influenced limited change in social position for some families, while others experienced economic instability after they immigrated, and some families regained their pre-migration middle-class lifestyles. These examples establish that social class was a significant factor in participants' Canadian immigration experiences and demonstrate the complex and dynamic nature of social class in the context of participants' immigration including their education, which is discussed next.

## 4.3 Education Contexts

Participants' post-secondary education contexts were diverse. For example, Benita, Rosa, Sofia, and Urracá were the first in their families to attend post-secondary education (PSE), while Benita and Rosa were considered “mature” students, who returned to their studies after multi-year absences. This discussion introduces participants' education contexts in terms of participants' post-secondary fields of study and institutions attended. The context of parents' education attainment follows, which provides further insight into participants' social class locations.

### 4.3.1 Participants' post-secondary education contexts.

The fifteen participants studied at institutions including Carleton University, Conestoga College, Fanshawe College, McMaster University, University of Toronto, University of Waterloo, and Western University in Ontario, Canada. Participants had completed or neared completion of Diplomas (2), B.A. (9), B.Ed. (2), B.FA (1), B.Sc. (3), Masters (3), and Ph.D. (2). Their post-secondary programs of study included Architecture, Business Marketing, Education, French, Health Sciences, Human Rights/Equity, Nutrition and Families, Nursing, Photography, Physiology, Political Science/ Gender Studies, Sociology, Spanish, and Theology. Several participants switched their fields of study. For example, six participants began their PSE with medical career aspirations—four intended to become doctors, and two studied nursing. Yet only Samara remained, in nursing. Note that program changes are discussed in the context of understanding the education system in Chapter 5, and in the context of educational persistence in Chapter 6.

Although more than half of the participants moved away from home to attend post-secondary education, only Arianna changed provinces. Arianna, Mayra, and Nicole intentionally sought the independence that distance from families provided. Nicole reported, “I was nervous coming so far, because I had to do everything on my own.” Moving away from home may have challenged the close-knit family relationships attributed to familism (Espinoza, 2010; Ovink, 2014) for participants such as Arianna and Nicole. Conversely, participants including Liliana, Luisa, and Urracá attended PSE in the cities where they resided. Luisa for example explained her university choice thus, “the scholarship was a little bit higher. And, it was local to family. I thought it was good to stay in [city], just because of expenses as well.” Clearly, when Luisa assessed her PSE opportunities, family relationships and financial factors influenced her post-secondary institution choice. Perhaps financial considerations may have influenced other participants’ decisions about where to attend university (Ramirez, 2013), although their PSE decisions were not discussed as such.

#### 4.3.2 The context of parents’ education attainment.

Several participants indicated that their parents were university-educated; for example, Isabel’s and Liliana’s parents attended universities in Colombia. Isabel’s parents were educators themselves, and she recalled her mother coaching her to read in Spanish, while Stella reminisced about her family’s home library in Colombia, which she recognized as a symbol of her parents’ education and class status. Conversely, other participants such as Benita, Sofia, and Urracá affirmed that their parents were not well educated. Benita’s recollection of poor and working-class parents’ perspectives about educational attainment demonstrates some of the mechanisms of class reproduction across generations in the context of education (Feliciano, 2006). She concluded:

Most Latinos that have come here are from low socio-economic [backgrounds], because of the war. So, education for them wasn’t an option. Education maybe was like grade 3, grade 4, grade 6, back home. Here, for their kids to do high school, that’s huge. But they don’t look past that. Or they don’t push past that. Because high school is free. Past that, you have to start spending money. It comes down to the money.

Benita explained that for people whose educational experiences are limited to elementary-level schooling, high school completion is educational success, while financial costs may prohibitively influence PSE decisions. Benita is one of several participants whose experiences demonstrate that educational attainment is contextual and influenced by parents' educational attainment.

This finding is consistent with Canadian research that indicates children of immigrants are more likely to obtain post-secondary education when their parents are highly educated (Abada & Tenkorang, 2009). Furthermore, parental education was found to be a better predictor of children's PSE attainment than parental income (Childs, Finnie, Mueller, 2010). However, as discussed previously, immigration trajectories disrupted participants' social class locations; although participants' class locations may be implicated by the context of their parents' education attainment, this location does not appear to be a definitive predictor of participants' education. Consider Arianna's and Samara's working-class parents who developed middle-class lifestyles that included the ability to afford the first-generation PSE attendance of their children. Similarly, in Canada the proportional increase of women who hold a PSE degree when their parents do not has generally increased over the past several decades (Turcott, 2011). Research is not conclusive about the relationships between parents' education and children's PSE attainment, particularly when compared to relationships between family social class and PSE. Research found that Latin American mothers' low education levels motivated daughters' academically (Cammarota, 2004; Ovink, 2014; Sánchez et al., 2010; Gerritsen & van Zenderen, 2012), and girls in low socioeconomic locations were found to be more likely to succeed in school (Feliciano, 2012). Although the context of parents' educational attainment may positively influence their daughters' PSE participation, participants' experiences and research suggest that there are a variety of factors and relationships (Abada et al., 2009) between parents' and daughters' PSE participation. The next section examines participants' family contexts in more depth.

## 4.4 Family Contexts

Parents played an important role in participants' educational persistence. This chapter section introduces participants' family composition, followed by a discussion about the

influences of family relationships. Some participants' familial relationships engage familism, the identification with and attachment to family, whereby individual interests are secondary to familial interests (Espinoza, 2010; Ovink, 2014). An introduction to participants' understanding of familial gender norms and education follows, which for participants represented culturally endorsed, conventional male-dominated, gendered norms. This discussion of participants' families presents an interesting portrait of the similarities and heterogeneity between their families.

#### 4.4.1 Family composition.

Participants' families had diverse compositions. At the time participants were interviewed, ten participants' parents were still married, while four had parents who were no longer married, and Benita's father had been a widower since she was a child. Benita, Luisa, and Rosa were parents themselves, Rosa and Urracá were married, and Samara was engaged to be married later that spring after we met. In terms of siblings, Mayra and Sofia each had a younger brother, six participants had a brother and a sister, four had one sister, and Arianna and Samara each had two sisters, while Nicole was an only child. Sibling birth order was well distributed among the participants; five participants were the eldest, five the middle child, and four the youngest. Relationships with extended family varied for participants. Extended family played an important role in the lives of Arianna, Elena, Mayra, and Valentina, while Luisa, Nicole, Rosa, Sofia, and Urracá determined that the absence of extended family in Canada contributed to their cultural isolation. Alternatively, although Benita, Isabel, Liliana, and Stella had no extended family in Canada, their families gather with other Latin Americans—often people of their own nationalities—who fulfilled extended family relationships.

#### 4.4.2 Family relationships.

Family and familial relationships significantly influenced participants and participants' education. For example, Arianna, Isabel, and Stella were just some of the participants who discussed the closeness of their family relationships. Isabel provided insight into her family's relationships when she reflected, "family's super important for me. And you see that in the way I interact with my parents, the way that I show my affection to them. They

influence my life.” Isabel valued and maintained a close relationship with her parents. Although she attended university out-of-province from her parents, Arianna was anxious to spend time with them after finishing her four-year degree. She enthused, “Latino families are really close in general. We’re a close family. I’m happy I get to move back home for a couple of years.” For Arianna and most the participants, family became a significant nucleus from which to continue their growth and development (Stein, et al., 2014). As Samara explained, “family’s your main foundation. For Hispanics, it’s very important.” While research suggests that Latin American families tend to have close, interdependent relationships (see Espinoza, 2010; Ovink, 2014), not all participants enjoyed close relationships with their family members. For example, Luisa commented, “in my family there’s not a whole lot of communication.... That’s not very common in Latinos’ [families]. Everything’s talked about. Like in my family it’s not really like that.” Luisa believed her family’s lack of communication was uncommon. For some participants, their family relationships were atypical of familism, while for others, their family relationships represented familism.

Familism or *familismo*, is grounded by a culture of care, the “cultural value prevalent in Latino families where there is an emphasis on family closeness” (Hernández, 2015, p. 215). Familism prioritizes family needs (Hernández, 2015; Ovink, 2014), with limited concern for the personal sacrifice (Sy & Romero, 2008) that might be required to maintain familism. “Unlike dominant [western] culture that values independence and self-sufficiency, [Latin American] familismo emphasizes cooperation and interdependence” (Espinoza, 2010, p. 318). Consider Samara, who preferred to spend time with her family:

You eat dinner, you clean up, and you have some family time, and then you can study. ... Not that my parents were ever, “No, you can’t study.” They would always say, “Study!” But you don’t want to miss the family bond, kind of thing.

Samara made it clear that family was paramount to her, and familism infused her family relationships, evident in a variety of contexts which included family interconnectedness and parents’ close monitoring of her and her sisters. Broadly speaking, familism values

are associated with prosocial behaviours (Streit et al., 2018) that facilitate the retention of ethnic identity and Spanish-speaking skills (Pacini-Ketchabaw, Bernard, & Freire, 2001), and positively correlate with educational attainment (Esparza & Sánchez, 2008; Feliciano & Lanuza, 2015; Roche, Ghazarian, & Fernandez-Esquer, 2012; Venzant Chambers et al., 2015).

Conversely, some argue that familism hinders educational progress (Feliciano, 2012). Familism may increase students' family obligations (Streit et al., 2018), and the expense of education may affect family members, since familism fosters a culture of working for the family (Cammarota, 2004; Sy & Romero, 2008; Zalequett, 2005). Elvia mused, "I think it's very embedded in us, that family is number one. That our main focus is family." For Elvia, the priority she placed on her family may indeed have hindered her educational progress. However, research indicates that the influence of familism-type family relationships generally supports educational pursuits by Latin American students (Esparza & Sánchez, 2008; Roche, Ghazarian, & Fernandez-Esquer, 2012; Stein et al., 2014; Stein et al., 2015). For example, from their work with the Canadian Ethnic Diversity Survey, Abada and Tenkorang (2009) argue that, "the closer ties females have with their families play an important role in their pursuit of higher education" (p. 594), which inserts gender as a factor in positive familial influences on PSE. Gloria and Castellanos (2012) conclude, "family is critical to Latina first generation [PSE] students' overall academic success and coping" (p. 92).

However, familism may be less significant when there are other factors involved (Morgan Consoli et al., 2015). For example, Ovink (2016) identified gendered familism, whereby Latin American families had different educational relationships and expectations of their female and male children. Furthermore, while family support is important, support from other factions could be valuable (Gloria & Castellanos, 2012), including the influence of teachers and peers. Although more research is needed to understand familism and education (Stein et al., 2014; Sy & Romero, 2008), particularly in the context of gender and class (Esparza & Sánchez, 2008), it is evident from most participants' discussions that familism is a dynamic aspect of their family relations.

#### 4.4.3 Family, education, and gender.

Participants including Elena, Samara, and Valentina maintained that Latin American families are governed by conventional and male-dominated values, which Valentina referred to as, “that patriarchal way of seeing things, that Latin Americans still have”. Furthermore, participants maintained that familial gender norms are established and maintained through familial expectations. For example, Stella mused, “I was raised cooking, and cleaning” while Valentina reflected, “I still think there are those values, especially around girls. You’ve turned a certain age. You have to start learning how to cook, how to sew, how to do all these things. Because you’re going to have a household.” Interestingly, participants’ perceptions about familial gender values crossed social class, which is evident from their discussions about family, education, and gender.

Although their social class beginnings are divergent, Benita and Valentina detailed similar understanding of familial gender norms, whereby women marry and raise families instead of pursuing careers. For example, Valentina explained how privileged young women attend university while waiting for husbands:

There’s a saying, *MMC*. In Spanish it’s “*mientras me case*, until I get married”. So, girls will get their university [degree]. Work for a little bit, and MMC while they find somebody to marry. And then once they get married, they stop. So even if [marriage] is your path, you still go to school because you have [parents] to support you.

According to Valentina, privileged women are cared for by their parents until they find husbands to care for them, and education provides them with a vehicle to pass that time.

Benita, who recognized education as a means of lifting herself out of poverty, related similar gendered expectations of marriage and family instead of education and career, although in Benita’s experience, the pursuit of husbands began at an earlier age. She reflected on the *Quinceañera*:

We’re more worried about doing a stupid Quinceañera. Which is the whole 15 years [old], then we celebrate with a wedding-like thing. But none of us are



worried to actually save money for college for our daughters. We'll save money for that [party] that takes about 10 thousand dollars. Because that Quinceañera is really about bringing her into society, so boys will see what she is like.... If you look at the past, this is why it was done. You're looking for a husband for your 15-year-old. Because back in the day, 15 years old was the marriageable age.

Despite her self-professed feminist questioning of this practice, Benita too celebrated her own daughter's Quinceañera. Thus, Benita's gender-identity beliefs challenged the patriarchal conventions in which she participated. Although Benita and Valentina discussed gendered roles and the pursuit of husbands, the search each described was decidedly different, which perhaps reflected differences at the intersections of their national origins and class locations. Poor Salvadorian families saved money, not for PSE, but to host a celebration that displayed daughters' attributes for potential suitors, while daughters in Colombian families of privilege attended PSE with sons of privileged families, to wait for marriage.

There are also similarities and differences in their understanding of the family role of wives and mothers. Benita, who grew up working-class, recounted arguing with her father, "'I want to play soccer.' Then [he said] 'No! You're a girl.' 'I want to do this.' 'No, you're a girl.' And it was always, 'You're a girl.'" Her female identity was employed to establish gendered restrictions on her independence. Subsequently, when she was a young mother, her daughter's father expected, "you're going to stay home, cook, clean, don't do nothing." Similarly, a few years later Benita's husband had comparable expectations. She recalled, "he was, 'You're going to be a home wife.' And I was like, 'But I want to go to school.' And he was like, 'No, you're going to be a home wife.'" These three men expressed similar expectations that Benita accept male-dominated gendered norms (Morales, 2008) of her role as daughter, mother, and wife. Evidently, she did not, since she continued to pursue her independence through employment and education.

With life experiences that were privileged when compared to Benita's, Valentina expressed similar understanding of gendered norms. Valentina declared:

“You’re going to be a housewife.” [Women] are supposed to be taken care of. Especially the guys, they think, “Oh, you’re my woman. You shouldn’t have to work. Because it looks bad on me that you’re working. Because that means I don’t make as much to support you.”

Valentina and Benita affirmed that husbands expected to be the family providers, while wives who sought employment threatened husbands’ authoritarian patriarchal status within the family. Benita explained, “in our culture, it should be enough. Being a mom. That’s your top goal, get a husband, and, live happily ever after, and he should support you.” In such a narrative, women are satisfied to marry one special man, bear his children, and care for his home. He in turn provides for her financially. Although Benita and Valentina seem to discuss similar interpretations of gender roles in the family, it is important to recognize the class differences that intersect with gender. Consider that Valentina refers to wives being “taken care of”, while Benita refers to caring for—cooking and cleaning—which ironically is interpreted as doing “nothing”.

Class differences such as those between Valentina’s and Benita’s understanding of girls’ education in the context of gendered marital roles, are not evident in participants’ discussions of familial expectations of daughters compared to expectations of sons. Several participants including Elvia, Luisa, and Liliana claimed that within Latin American families, patriarchal expectations of children still prevail in their own families. Specifically, sons get more latitude while daughters face more regulation. Elvia complained, “I feel like he gets a little bit more freedom.... [while] I take on more of the responsibility, in comparison to my brother,” and Luisa explained, “I do my laundry. I do my food. I do my cleaning. And my brother doesn’t,” Furthermore, Luisa attributed her educational persistence in part to the independence she developed from familial, gender-specific responsibilities:

The differences between the brothers and the sisters, I think that impacts their education.... I think we approach school differently .... I think that [brother] needs a lot more of a push than I do. And I think that a lot of that comes from what happens in the home.... I feel he’s had a lot more done for him than I have.

So that's kind of made me more independent. And, not rely on anybody for my abilities in school.

Luisa's experiences are consistent with findings from Ovink's (2014) intersectional study of Latin American students in California. Ovink identifies gendered differences in students' educational attitudes and behaviours. Additionally, Ovink argues that female students' desire for independence influenced their commitment to their studies. Research indicates that although female Latin American students may understand how girls "should" behave in the context of conventional familial gender roles, as individuals they themselves are more likely to seek education and the independence that education promises (Denner & Dunbar, 2004; Lopez, 2003; Ovink, 2016).

Although several participants discussed patriarchal, conventional gender values and assumptions, similar to those detailed by Benita and Valentina, such gendered values and assumptions were not generally indicative of participants' own family relationships and interactions. For example, when families experienced poverty, parents of participants including Elvia, Rosa, and Urracá expected their daughters to work to support the family, which circumvented gendered norms such as the ones Benita and Valentina discussed. However, most participants' families highly prioritized daughters' education. Consider that Arianna, Isabel, Liliana, Nicole, Stella, and Valentina—who have post-secondary educated parents—and Elena, Elvia, Luisa, Mayra, and Samara—who do not—have families who expected and encouraged their daughters to complete their post-secondary education. In most participants' families, daughters' gender identity does not preclude education, and this perspective generally crossed social class differences between participants. Furthermore, there is considerable research about Latin American daughters whose education has been encouraged by their parents (see for example, Feliciano & Lanuza, 2015; Gonzales, 2012; Ovink, 2014; Plunkett et al., 2009; Rivera & Gallimore, 2006; Sapp et al., 2016). Latinas received "strong encouragement" from their families to complete their post-secondary studies (Ovink, 2014, p. 279), while mothers' encouragement was particularly predictive of daughters' academic results (Plunkett et al., 2009). Parental support of education is addressed in more detail in Chapter 6.

## 4.5 Identity Contexts

This section explores participants' "not from here, not from there" identities, and the dynamic, contextual nature of their identities (Vetter et al., 2011). As illustrated below, most of the participants referred to their ethnic identities in multiple ways, which included aspects of nationality, and transnational Canadian identities. Most participants signify their ethnic identity by their use of the Spanish language. Finally, the nuances and ambiguities of participants' racial identities illustrate the complexities of Latin American identity for these participants.

### 4.5.1 Ethnic identity.

Participants revealed dynamic, complex, and contextual identities. Consider that they characterized their ethnic identities with various and multiple terms, which included *Hispanic* (Mayra, Samara, Sofia, Valentina), *Latina* (Benita, Elena, Elvia, Luisa, Nicole, Rosa, Sofia, Urracá, Valentina), *Latin* (Arianna, Samara, Stella), *Latino* (Benita, Elena, Luisa, Urracá), and *Latin American* (Elvia, Liliana, Mayra, Rosa, Sofia, Urracá, Valentina). Several participants used *Spanish* (Benita, Liliana, Mayra, Samara, Sofia, Stella) in their identity discussions, however, reference to Spanish identity may be misleading since participants are not from Spain. Instead, *Spanish* indicated *Spanish-speaking*, which is a significant aspect of participants' identity that is discussed later in this chapter. Additionally, most participants also referred to their national identities. For example, Valentina identified herself as a Colombian person born to Colombian parents even though she has never lived in Colombia, and was born in Guatemala, raised in Mexico, and educated in several countries. Regardless of the terms used, few participants limited self-identification of their ethnic identity to one concept; while Samara exclaimed that she is "one hundred percent Latin", she also identified her "Spanish church" and her "Hispanic culture". The apparent variability of participants' self-identification signifies the variability of their Latin American identity (Alcoff, 2005; Armony, 2014) and prevents "viewing Latinos as a monolithic group" (Núñez, 2014a). See Appendix A for a detailed examination of the context and complexity of these and other terms.

Ethnicity dominated participants' discussions about their identities. Valentina reflected:

I don't see myself as that Hispanic. Like, my food isn't overly Colombian, I don't cook overly Colombian food. I only speak Spanish to my mom, when I'm on the phone. If I hear anybody else speaking Spanish, I'll still speak in English to them.... I forget I am [Hispanic]. But then I see myself and I'm like, "Oh *yeah!* I'm *definitely* Hispanic!"

Valentina concluded that she still considers herself ethnically Hispanic, and confirms that phenotypically she is Hispanic, despite the possibility that she may not meet some pre-determined markers of ethnic identity. Although challenged by others for not retaining particular markers of her Colombian identity, Valentina's "definitely Hispanic" identity remained. She recounted:

[Colombians] behave a certain way. My boyfriend, he went to school [with Colombian students]. And he's like, "Yeah, you're not really that Colombian." And I'm like, "Thanks?" And he's like, "Yeah, well, you don't like to dance." I hate dancing. "You don't actually speak Spanish all the time." Like, "You don't like associating with Hispanic people." Like, "You're not that Hispanic." Like, "You don't even have an accent or anything." And I'm just like, "Okay, well, that's true I guess." But deep down, I'm still Hispanic.

Valentina acknowledged that although she may not reach perceived standards of ethnic identity performance, she claims her ethnic identity according to her own terms.

Ethnic identity anchors understanding of identity within social, cultural, and political contexts and practices. Hall (1996b) explains the importance of contextualizing ethnic identity, "the term ethnicity acknowledges the place of history, language and culture in the construction of subjectivity and identity, as well as the fact that all discourse is placed, positioned, situated, and all knowledge is contextual" (p. 446). Ethnicity represents this contextualized, situated identity. However, consider Elena's self-identity when she contextualizes her Latina identity at school:

Being Latina at school was just, kind of hard. Being Latina in school is just kind of hard, in general. Either if it's a guy or a girl. Sometimes, I feel like, it's just hard. Having this stigma. Sometimes I feel like, being Latino is kind of hard.

Situated within the context of education, Elena associated academic difficulty to her stigmatized ethnic identity. Furthermore, Elena's experiences are consistent with research that examines influences between identity and academic well-being. For example, racialization is associated with lower levels of academic performance by Latin American students (DeGarmo & Martinez, 2006; Mroczkowski & Sánchez, 2015; Stein et al., 2015), and African American students (Butler-Barnes et al., 2013). For Elena, the intersections of her academic abilities with her ethnicity creates a deficit concept of her identity.

Elvia's identification of her ethnic identity as, "*No desde aquí, no desde allí*. Not from here, not from there," recalls Bhabha's (1994) theorization about hybridity and the third space. Hybridity is found in the third space, the interstice between two or more identities. This third space challenges the fixity or essentialization of identity (Bhabha, 1994), and includes cultural, ethnic, and racial identities. However, Anthias (2001)—whose theorizing provides the foundation for the Multilevel Model of Intersectionality (MMI) that guides this study—argues that hybridity is inadequate to represent identity. Anthias (2001) interprets Bhabha's (1994) hybridity as static identity between two opposites, which excludes multiple and dynamic elements of identity, including class and gender. Moreover, Hall (1996b) cautions against identity essentialization and fixation. For example, he refers to a binary construction of racial and ethnicity identity that would be "predicated on the assumption that gender and sexuality would stay the same, and remain fixed and secured" (Hall, 1996b, p. 445). In other words, binary constructs of racial and ethnic identities would require static locations of gender and sexuality. Yet study participants' experiences reveal the dynamic nature at the intersections of their identities.

***Transnational identity.*** Several participants claimed transnational, Canadian and Latin American identities, whereby an individual maintains connections between the family's country of origin and the new home country (Anthias, 2009, 2012b; Núñez, 2014a,

2014b; Sanchez & Machado-Casas, 2009; Vargas, 2008). Anthias (2001) draws from Hall (1990) to argue that ethnicity is *more* than identity based on origins, and instead, “relates both to the homeland, and to the society of settlement and is reconfigured within a diasporic space” (p. 625). She continues, “identities are never complete and are being continuously made and remade” (p. 625). Thus, multi-national contexts inform transnational identities. Furthermore, transnationality does not refer to a balanced identification between the new country (Canada) and the family’s country of origin. Instead, participants’ transnational ethnic identities seesawed between Canadian and country-of-origin identities; they experienced dynamic, contextual, and even sometimes ambiguous, transnationality. Consider for example, the contextualized, “not from here, not from there” identities of participants such as Benita and Stella, who immigrated to Canada as children. Benita found rejection rather than acceptance of her transnational identity. She conceded, “[now] I’m Canadian. I’ll be honest with you. I am displaced in my [Salvadorian] community. Because I am too Canadian for them, and I am not Canadian enough [for Canadians].” Benita’s connections to Salvadorian communities and Canadian communities changed over time, and at times she felt displaced by both.

Conversely, Stella credited the concurrent development of her Colombian and Canadian identities to childhood experiences when she explained:

I do have a cultural mix of things. I went through my teenage years, the years where you really develop your identity here [Ontario, Canada], but I also went through them with a family that’s very tied to the Colombian culture. So, I went with my parents, going to their parties, with all their Colombian friends, and the dancing and the music. But also, I grew up going to high school in a small suburban town, where you go out and have bonfires and drink beer.

Stella attributed distinct locations, contexts, and relationships to different aspects of her transnational identity. She concluded:

So, there’s that mesh of cultures, where I don’t quite fit into the stereotypical Latina, or the Colombian culture, but I’m not totally Canadian. I don’t feel fully one or the other, but I definitely feel like both of them are part of my identity.

Stella recognized the Colombian and Canadian influences on her transnational identity development. Although both elements framed her identity, neither dominated Stella's "mesh of cultures" identity; depending on the context, she situated her transnational identity accordingly. Stella's experiences of "not from here, not from there" were different from Benita's, although their identities relied on context for definition. Alternatively, Arianna considered a neither/nor location to define her ethnic identity when she reflected, "I don't even know if I would say I'm Canadian, but I don't even know if I'd say I'm Peruvian either." Interestingly, Canadian-born Elena, Nicole, Sofia, and Samara recognized their transnational ethnic identities, which are contextualized by their families' (trans) national identities.

Participants indicated that travel outside of Canada produced another dynamic context for transnational identity, particularly when childhood visits to their families' countries of origin presented participants with dynamic, "not from here, not from there" episodes. For example, when Isabel visited Colombia at aged 12, she could not leave when planned. She exclaimed, "I was crying. All of my cousins were there, and I was like, 'I want to go back to my country [Canada]! I want to go back to my country!'" But Isabel was admonished, "This *is* your country!" Isabel was caught between her Canadian and Colombian identities, and while she related more to her Canadian identity at that time, others positioned her identity as Colombian. Alternatively, Elena found that when she visited her family's country of origin, her Ecuadorian identity was questioned and rejected by others, *because* of her Canadian identity. Elena explained:

Sometimes when I go to Ecuador, I don't feel Latina enough. I go down there, and it's like, "You're the white girl." Yet I'm not white. Going back to my country of origin, I'm not seen as the Latina. I'm seen as the white girl, which is really weird, because I'm pretty sure I'm the same colour [as they are].

Elena realized that although she did not recognize a difference, others positioned her ethnic identity as white/Canadian, and less Ecuadorian than Elena positioned herself. At the intersections of race and ethnicity, Elena's transnational identity was positioned as different.



At the risk of belabouring the point, Elena's travels to study in Europe reveal yet another dimension to the complexities of her transnational identity. When European customs officials questioned her national identity, she was obliged to justify her Canadian identity, explain her family roots, and challenge stereotypical views of Canadian identity. Elena mused, "Because in [Ecuador], I'm not Latina, but I am. But they don't see me. Then when I come here [Canada], I feel like I'm Latina. And then when I go somewhere else, I feel like I'm Canadian. It's weird." Thus, in Ecuador Elena was the unseen white Latina, in Europe she was the brown Canadian insider, while in Canada, she is the Latina outsider. Elena concluded, "Sometimes I kind of lose identity. Being here now, I identify as Latina. Before, I just identified as Canadian. Especially when traveling, I identify as Canadian." Hall (1996a) argues that identities are constructed in multiple ways, fragmented rather than singular, and Elena's dynamic identity constructions illustrate the fragmented, contextual influence on her transnational identities.

Participants managed their transnationality when they maintained aspects of their ethnic identities while adapting aspects of Canadian identity. This negotiation allows for the positioning of ethnicity as a location of strength (Blair & Cobas, 2006), which also facilitates academic well-being (Barajas & Pierce, 2001; Blair & Cobas, 2006; Colón, & Sánchez, 2010). Evidently, participants' transnational identities are dynamic and contextual, and not dependent on whether or when participants immigrated to Canada. Another influence on identity is Spanish language fluency, which is discussed next.

#### 4.5.2 Identity and Spanish language fluency.

According to participants, Spanish speaking is a signifier of identity, and particularly ethnic identity. Consider Samara, who acknowledged the importance of her Spanish identity and expressed pride in being Spanish. She referred to maintaining aspects of her Spanish identity such as her use of the Spanish language, and her worry that her nieces lack Spanish fluency. When I asked how she identifies herself, Samara recounted, "I'm fluent. The music I listen to is in Spanish. I read in Spanish. The food I eat is Spanish. So, I would say I'm very cultural. I love my culture. I love dancing salsa." Samara confirmed that her ethnic identity is outwardly performed through actions that she determined are Spanish. Hall (1996b) argues that ethnicity provides, "recognition that we all speak from

a particular place, out of a particular history, out of a particular experience, a particular culture, without being contained by that position” (p. 447). Hall indicates that ethnicity locates that “particular place”, and ethnicity creates self-identity. With evident pride, Rosa concluded with a hint of superiority, Spanish is “a different way of thinking. It’s a different culture.” For Rosa, the Spanish language represents a particular difference from English speakers. Language in particular is a critical space for identity construction.

Spanish fluency is an important aspect of participants’ ethnic identity expression (Colón & Sánchez, 2010; Venzant Chambers et al., 2015). Arianna for example acknowledged pride in and enjoyment of her ability to speak Spanish when she enthused, “the important thing is how I can speak Spanish. I love it! And I think it’s such a great language.” Arianna expressed her ethnicity through her Spanish fluency. For Liliana, her Spanish language retention conveyed a successful persona influenced by her ethnic identity. Liliana recalled, “I think the fact that I kept my language, never lost Spanish, is a big success.” Perhaps Spanish language abilities contribute to an “immersion in culture” which Sanchez (2001) argues, enables people to “replenish ourselves with culture and family history to aid psychological survival” (p. 375). Although Sanchez referred to a physical cross-border context, similar implications are possible in participants’ replenishment through their Spanish language fluency.

Language fluency contextualized participants’ identity experiences. When they arrived in Canada, some participants spoke only Spanish and had to learn a new language. Isabel recounted the effect of learning French when she immigrated to Quebec, “because I came here so [young], I picked up the language pretty well. Like the French, and so no accent. I was just kind of, Canadian, I guess.” Isabel, who quickly adapted to her new Canadian environment, associated her French fluency to her Canadian identity. Yet Canadian language fluency signified difference for Elvia and Stella, who attended English-dominant schools. Stella explained how her un-accented English presented unexpected challenges:

I came when I was so young, that when I went to elementary school nobody spoke Spanish. So, I grew up with all the Canadian kids. By the time I got to high

school, I didn't have an accent. So, a lot of the Spanish kids don't perceive me as Spanish. But I'm also not [perceived as] Canadian.

For Stella, growing up in English-dominant neighbourhoods cultivated her English-speaking abilities, while more recent arrivals from Colombia challenged the authenticity of her Colombian identity. Thus, Stella's dual-language fluency created barriers between her and her Colombian peers at school.

Ball, Rollock, Vincent, and Gillborn (2013) argue, language and accent "are markers that construct mundane but significant social exclusions and inclusions." (p. 282). Such exclusions are evident in Nicole's experiences. Nicole was the only participant who did not speak Spanish, and this state affected her ability to assert her ethnic identity. She recounted almost wistfully:

I don't speak Spanish. So, anyone who sees me, and if I tell them that I'm Chilean, or I wear my Chile hat, they'll be like, "Oh, you're Chilean!" And then right away they'll start speaking to me in Spanish. And I understand them, but I can't speak to them back. And I think that disappoints them a little, and they just, stop talking to me.

Rebuffed by Spanish-speaking peers, Nicole's inability to speak fluent Spanish deterred relationship-building. Spanish-speaking peers projected a deficit view of Nicole's identity because she could not affirm her ethnic identity through Spanish language, which created barriers for Nicole. Furthermore, perhaps Nicole's self-identity included an element of deficit identity too; later in our discussion, Nicole expressed regret that she had not yet learned to speak Spanish and hoped to learn someday.

As Anthias (2002) argues, "an essential step in the production of self is the boundary of the self from the other" (p. 497). Nicole saw herself as Other, in the context of Spanish language fluency and perhaps some elements of her ethnic identity. Interestingly, research indicates that maintaining Spanish language fluency retains Latin American identity and encourages girls' academic performance (See Barajas & Pierce, 2001; Blair & Cobas, 2006; Colón & Sánchez, 2010; Feliciano & Lanuza, 2015; Venzant Chambers

et al., 2015). Furthermore, retention of country-of-origin language has been positively associated with university completion by Canadian daughters of immigrants (Abada & Tenkorang, 2009). Evidently, participants' Spanish language fluency asserted their ethnic identity and maintained ethnicity boundaries. The next section of the chapter examines challenges to participants' identity, which reveals intersections of ethnic and racial identity.

#### 4.5.3 Intersections of ethnic and racial identity.

My main identity was that I was white. It was a physical white. It was, "[Elvia], why do you have to wear sunscreen?" or, "[Elvia], why do you sunburn so easily?" It was my outward appearance. Like, "You don't look Colombian." And then it was the [culture]. I grew up watching *Blue's Clues*, and *Dora and the Explorer*. English shows.

Elvia's Colombian identity was challenged by her Colombian peers who positioned her racially and ethnically as a white person, as the "white" Colombian, even though she considers herself a Colombian person of colour, and her skin tone was not light. Elvia maintained that her peers conflated her racial and ethnic identity as white. When I asked participants about their identities, like Elvia, they prioritized their ethnic identities while racial aspects of their identities were secondary. Perhaps they found ambiguity in racial identity, as Urracá declared, "we're very diverse in our phenotype. It's difficult to say who is Latino and who isn't. So, it's difficult to make sense of what it means to be Latina." Urracá confirmed that Latin American identity includes racial and ethnic elements, which creates "not from here, not from there" identities. Latin American identity does not "fit" North American contexts that situate people as either Black or white (Alcoff, 2006).

Participants' identities are racially diverse and dynamic in nature in the sense that their perceptions of their racial identities changed over time and between contexts. Note that in their discussions of ethnic and racial identity, participants often conflated *white* and *Canadian*. Although sometimes ambiguous, participants clearly found these terms synonymous at times, and representative of particular racial and ethnic identities. Issues

of whiteness pervaded participants' identities, and similar to Elvia's experiences, challenged participants to define their ethnic and racial identities against whiteness as the normalized reference point. This section of the chapter explores how participants racially identified themselves, and how participants engaged whiteness to define themselves or to explain how others defined them. Note that only Arianna and Rosa spoke of themselves in relation to black identity.

***White identity?*** Participants engaged whiteness as a reference point to define their ethnic and racial identities. Isabel's discussion of her transnational identity in the context of race was revealing. When I asked how she identified herself, Isabel, who immigrated to Quebec as a young child, explained:

If you asked me that question when I was in Quebec, I would have said Canadian. Because I wasn't really exposed to the Colombian culture that much. Actually, I just never really listened to Spanish music at all. I was always with white kids. I was definitely Canadian.

While conflating racial and national identities, Isabel reasoned that she identified herself as Canadian due to her lack of exposure to Colombian culture, and she attributed her ethnic identity at that time, to her immersion with white peers.

In contrast to Isabel's intersections of ethnic and racial identity, light-complexioned participants such as Nicole, Samara, and Sofia were positioned by others as neither woman of colour, nor women who are white. Consider the challenge to Nicole's identity when another student argued that Nicole is too white to understand the racism that Chileans experience. Nicole protested, "I may have white skin, but I don't identify as white! I do identify as Latina." Nicole vehemently rejected another's positioning of her as white, abruptly different from her self-identified identity at the intersection of ethnicity and race. Similarly, Sofia argued that despite outward appearances found in skin tones, Latin Americans are not white:

Our culture is not white. Like, maybe our skin tone yeah, we're fairer skinned. But that doesn't mean our culture is white. And I feel like, that's what matters in

this whole idea of people of colour. That, even though you can be fair skinned, white....at the same time, there are so many cultural differences.

Even though positioned by others as white, Sofia too rejected the ethnic and cultural elements of white identity and upheld her identity as a woman of colour. Stuck in the middle, Nicole and Sofia were situated by others as neither women of colour, nor white either. Similar to Latin American students in other research (Fergus, 2009), participants positioned their racial identities differently from how others positioned them, although unlike the participants in Fergus' study, Nicole and Sofia maintained their power to self-identify.

While Nicole and Sofia were considered by others as *too* white, Rosa was *never* white. Rosa explained her identity:

I'm a Latina for sure. But [my family] are also mixed. We have African descendants. And if you look at us, we're really mixed, and so I think that's important. Even though while growing up, sometimes I was black, sometimes I wasn't, but I was never white.

Rosa embraced the complexity and diversity of her family members' Black identities. Studies of African-American women illustrate that self-identity such as Rosa presented—referred to as “strengths-based assets against racial discrimination” by Butler-Barnes et al. (2013)—enhances academic well-being (see for example, Carter Andrews, 2009; Hubbard, 2005). This strength contrasts with the frustration and anger expressed by Nicole and Sofia when others perceived them as white. Participants in this study described their identities in relation to whiteness, some engaged white identity to create boundaries (Hall, 1996a) between themselves and others, while for some participants, links to white identity such as white-washed, were more ambiguous.

**White-washed.** “White-washed” is a term some participants engaged to signify their own ethnic differences from and conformity to white/Canadian identities. However, none defined it more specifically than to narrate their experiences of “not from here not from there” racial/ethnic identities, whereby their identities were more representative of white

Canadians and less like those of their cultural, national, or ethnic identities. The ambiguity inherent in white-washed identity is evident in the comparison of the white-washed identity experiences of Elvia and Isabel. Elvia maintained that being white-washed signified her differences, and she was rejected by white and Colombian peers alike, *because* she was white-washed. Conversely, Isabel embraced the term; pragmatic since her white friends and her Colombian friends accepted her *despite* being white-washed. Furthermore, Isabel revealed that her white-washed identity held more significance for her “Spanish friends”. Elvia’s experiences were similar to those of participants in Bettie’s (2014) study of the intersections of class and racial identities of white and Mexican-American working-class girls. Bettie found that participants challenged others by accusing them of acting white, a powerful pejorative that contested ethnic identity, and an experience also shared by Nicole and Sofia.

Although white-washed identity indicated non-conformity to expectations of racial/ethnic identity, participants such as Isabel and Sofia appeared to accept, or even embrace their white-washed identity. Sofia acknowledged the pervasiveness of her white-washed identity when she declared:

I’m so white-washed. The way I dress, the way I speak, I come off as very white. But maybe that’s because I just wanted to be [white] when I was younger. Maybe that had a huge influence on who I am today.

From the complex intersections of her racial and ethnic identity, Sofia recognized that she had internalized white identity.

Isabel, Sofia, and Urracá were among the participants who attributed their white-washed identity, at least in part, to their childhood immersion in white/Canadian society, coupled with the corresponding limited exposure to others of their ethnicity. Sofia complained, “I feel like I’m very white-washed. Because I didn’t grow up with [culture]. Because our community is so small.” She, like Isabel, attributed her white-washed identity to limited cultural connections. Isabel explained:

I always grew up with white kids. I was the only Colombian really. I was the only brown kid in my school. It was [a] really, really white part of Quebec, barely any immigrants. So, I was too white-washed to be with Spanish people, and then too brown to be with white people.

Isabel recalled that she found herself caught in the middle, and subsequently developed white-washed characteristics from the predominance of white people, and the absence of Colombian/Spanish people in her school and community. Subsequently, Isabel expected that white-washed identity was attributed to a combination of ethnic identities. However, the harm, if any, from acceptance of her white-washed ethnicity (Urrieta, 2007) is not clear. Venzant Chambers et al., (2015) refer to the “racial opportunity cost” of students who assimilate into the dominant culture in their pursuit of academic success, which refers to loss of ethnic or cultural identity connections. Nevertheless Hall (1996a) argues:

Identities are never unified... but increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and position. They are subject to a radical historicization, and are constantly in the process of change and transformation (p. 4).

Isabel seemed to embrace her dynamic and transformative white-washed identity, although other participants did not.

Participants indicated that racial identity was an important factor in their Latin American identities (Alcoff, 2006), while Spanish language fluency anchors their ethnic identity. However, participants’ experiences with racial identity were sometimes less about how they identified themselves, and more about how others framed them, such as according to their skin colour (Fergus, 2009). It is interesting that issues of class identity were not incorporated into participants’ interpretations of white identity in the context of their own identities. Isabel, Lilianna, and Urracá are among the participants who grew up in predominantly white, middle-class suburbs. Yet although some participants conflated race with whiteness and whiteness with class privilege, they address issues of race rather than class in their discussions of racial identity, and do not consider intersections of race



and class. This limitation provides opportunity for future research. The next chapter returns to issues of identity in the context of participants' navigation of identity and education.

## 4.6 Summary

This chapter introduced historical and contextual factors that influence these participants and their educational persistence: contexts of immigration, education, family, and identity, which situated participants individually, relationally, and systemically. Immigration contexts identified participants' families' immigration trajectories and revealed participants' dynamic class locations. Next, educational contexts provided insight into participants' educational histories, which included parents' educational attainment and the implications of class locations. Participants' family contexts followed. This section introduced the significance of family for the participants, and the role of familism in their education experiences. Participants acknowledged issues of male-dominated gender norms in the context of education, which for some participants contradicted their own perspectives about gender. Regardless of gender norms, most participants experienced familial expectations that female Latin American children attend PSE. The last section addressed participants' identity contexts, whereby participants prioritized their ethnic identities over other factors of identity. Participants' identities are racially diverse and dynamic in nature; their complex identities changed over time, and between contexts. For example, Spanish language fluency provides a primary indicator of ethnic identity for most participants. Additionally, despite issues of ambiguity, racial identity is a dominant factor of participants' identity, with comparisons to whiteness being a particular challenge for some participants. The next chapter about participants' negotiation of institutional privilege includes discussion of participants' identity negotiations, which further reveals the complex and dynamic nature of their identities.

## Chapter 5: Negotiating Institutional Dynamics that Privilege Some Students and Not Others

The white preppy kids have money.  
Like of course they're going to make it! (Samara)

You'll be treated better because you look white, and you speak perfect English,  
and you don't look like an immigrant. (Rosa)

### 5.1 Introduction

Participants such as Rosa and Samara evoke complex intersections of racial, ethnic, and classed identities in the context of academic achievement, whereby they maintain that academic achievement is more likely to occur when students are privileged by race and class. Although participants contend that successful students are wealthy, white, and rarely Latin American, as Núñez (2014a) argues, there is limited intersectional research about “institutional dynamics that privilege some and not others” (p. 48). To understand how institutional dynamics influence participants’ education, privileging some students and not others, this chapter examines participants’ experiences with institutional and relational norms and structures (Núñez, 2014a, 2014b). The Organizational, Representational, Intersubjective, and Experiential Domains of Power from the MultiLevel Model of Intersectionality (MMI) (Núñez, 2014a) (see Figure 1.1), are engaged here to analyze participants’ experiences with institutional challenges: affording post-secondary education, withstanding institutionalized racism, and navigating transitions to post-secondary education. Note that since this is an intracategorical analysis (McCall, 2005), some participants’ discussions are foregrounded (Shields, 2008) to illustrate some experiences in depth and participants’ differences, rather than prioritizing only the similarity of their experiences.

### 5.2 Negotiating the costs of post-secondary education: “If you don’t have to worry about money, then you can be academically privileged.” (Valentina)

The costs associated with their post secondary studies challenged participants and their families in diverse ways. Participants acknowledged class differences between

themselves and their more advantaged peers. For example, Elvia and Valentina reasoned that class privilege freed students to prioritize their studies, while students like themselves juggled work and school responsibilities. Elvia identified privileged students as, “the kids who just get to worry about school. The kids who can spend all day working on assignments. Who don’t have to worry about where their next meal’s going to come from.” Elvia found that social class locations privileged some students’ academic efforts, while she situated herself as not privileged in this context. Although Mayra’s parents financed her B.Sc. and B.Ed. studies, she worked two part-time jobs to afford her Child-Life Specialist certification, which she completed concurrently with her B.Ed. degree. She confirmed, “I have to pay for a lot of things for myself. Like my phone bills, and hydro, and things like that.” Mayra was one of several participants who worked long hours while she attended post-secondary education (Sánchez et al., 2010). Unlike Samara, who confidently assured that she readily handled both responsibilities successfully, other participants struggled to juggle their work and education commitments. For example, Valentina recounted, “when I get home, I’m just like, “Okay, I get to nap now!” And then, sometimes I don’t get schoolwork [done].” Valentina admitted that her paid work often interfered with her schoolwork completion. While work financed participants’ education and associated costs, work often came at the expense of their studies.

Elvia’s parents encouraged her to attend university; although affording it was a challenge, they expected to somehow “make it work” despite their limited means (Hernández, 2015, p. 212). And despite the economic challenges, Elvia’s dual responsibilities of work and school initially proved helpful. She recalled:

At first it was actually really great, because I didn’t have time for distractions. It was, *Go to work, come home, do school work, go to school, do it all over again.* So, to me, it always pushed me to be more productive. And to get things done quicker.

Although work occupied much of her time, Elvia seemed satisfied with her academic progress during her first year. However, Elvia’s ability to balance educational and fiscal

management languished in her second year. She explained, “I was finally paying things for myself. If I didn’t work, I didn’t pay rent. I couldn’t eat. That’s where the pressures really started hitting hard.” Elvia struggled to work enough to fund her education and support herself, without hampering her studies. Moreover, she could not maintain the balance that she had achieved during her first year and her health suffered, so Elvia spent time away from her PSE. She, like other participants, needed to work to afford her studies and living expenses.

Issues of poverty punctuated Urracá’s education experiences. The first in her family to attend post-secondary education, Urracá’s work and school priorities illustrate how working interfered with schooling, which she referred to as the “inherent contradiction of work and school.” Urracá recounted that to support the family financially, she and her two older siblings started working at age 15. She spent school lunchtimes in the library doing the schoolwork she had no time for after school, and she avoided the cafeteria to hide her lunch-less situation. After school, Urracá bolted to catch the bus to her afternoon shift work, which limited her after-school activities and peer relationship-building. She identified the “clashing priorities” between her schooling responsibilities and her familial economic responsibilities. Urracá argued that the many hours she worked to help support her family financially interfered with her studies; therefore, her marks suffered.

Remarkably, during her second year of full-time university Urracá ensured that she worked about 32 hours per week to qualify for health benefits at work. Her continued anxiety about work and its impact on the quality of her schoolwork was evident when she fretted, “I don’t really have as much time to do the readings, the assignments. I always feel really rushed.” Urracá was one of several participants who worried that the time spent working interfered with the time needed to devote to her studies. The contradiction of this “double-edged sword” (Espinoza, 2010) meant that family obligations competed with school commitments.

Urracá, was one of several participants who worked to support their families financially (Sy & Romero, 2008). Elvia reflected:

There's that need to be responsible. That's the reason I started working when I was younger ... because I knew the hardships at home. I felt, "Yes, I'm a student, but I'm [also] a part of this family." That's my main priority, taking care of my family and helping out in any way I can. So sometimes, school has taken a back seat to family.

Elvia's deeply held commitment to family, which might conflict with her own educational needs, represented her "culture of concern" which likely resulted from "years of socialization to respect and value family above personal needs" (Sy & Romero, 2008, p. 219). Several participants voiced their commitment to family, or familism (Hernández, 2015; Ovink, 2014; Sy & Romero, 2008). Elvia's experiences are consistent with research that investigated familial and economic contexts of low-income Latin American students who were transitioning into high school. Sánchez, Esparza, Colón, and Davis (2010) argue:

Holding strong attitudes about assisting the family and being of low SES creates a set of stressful circumstances in which emerging adults balance multiple responsibilities in and outside the home. This constant balancing act often creates an added source of stress that ultimately affects their academic progress, relationships, and their mental well-being." (p. 879)

Elvia experienced that stress of balancing multiple responsibilities, and then she postponed her university studies while she worked to finance her education and living expenses.

When participants had to choose between their education or their family's needs, the family culture of working for the family dominated such decisions (Hernández, 2015; Ovink, 2014; Sy & Romero, 2008). Elena declared, "I would rather start helping my mom economically, than finish school. I would feel more of that pressure, because you would be fighting for survival, [rather] than your education." Elena was one of several participants who affirmed that in the case of her family's economic distress, she would work to support her family, at the expense of her education. The culture of working for the family is evident in Rosa's experiences. Rosa left her university studies to work when

her working-class family lacked the economic resources to support her post secondary education (PSE) endeavours. Rosa explained, “I attempted to go to university when I was younger, after graduating high school. But it was hard; there was no money. We didn’t really have money to pay for university. And, it just didn’t happen.” Rosa’s first PSE attempt was terminated due to the financial needs of her family and the financial demands of post-secondary education. Later as a mature student, Rosa re-started her post-secondary education and relied on grants, student loans, and work placements to fund her education. Rosa’s experiences are consistent with findings from interview research with low income young adults about family obligations and PSE enrollment, whereby family obligations influenced some participants to delay their education so they could work and financially support their families (Sánchez et al., 2010).

Some participants were reticent to discuss their family economic situations, while some participants including Elvia and Rosa spoke specifically of their families’ poverty—without using terms such as “poor” or “poverty”—and for them, family survival came before education. Yet—and this will become more evident in Chapter 6—family relationships, including their corresponding obligations, are important for participants to maintain. Family relationships ensure that buffers and supports are available to counter the stresses of education, which Colon and Sánchez (2010) found in their studies of urban Latin American youth (see also Espinoza, 2010; Sapp et al., 2016; Sy & Romero, 2008; Taylor & Fernandez-Bergersen, 2015; Zalaquett, 2005). The importance of familial relationships may explain why participants such as Elvia and Urracá sought to balance multiple commitments to familial relationships, with the demands of their education.

In addition to working to financially support their families, participants engaged other strategies to alleviate the economic impact of their PSE on their families. Participants including Mayra and Stella affirmed that they were “very conscious” of their everyday expenses in recognition of the financial challenges their education placed on their families (Hernández, 2015). Elvia’s PSE attendance away from home seems counter-intuitive since this might have increased the family’s financial burden produced by her education and living costs, and the concurrent loss of her income. Instead, her independence and self-sufficiency removed her from her parents’ financial

responsibilities. This is consistent with other research findings (Sánchez et al., 2010; Sy & Romero, 2008, for example). Sy and Romero (2008) argue that “participants’ primary concern was to be self-reliant as a means of relieving [the] burden on family members” (p. 218).

Some participants accessed student support programs to help fund their academic pursuits. For example, the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) provides students with study grants and loans. Liliana recalled:

We were newcomers, so for me there was no savings for my education. I had to rely on OSAP.... that’s a big challenge. If you don’t have that money, then how are you going to school? How are you going to afford everything? OSAP is a big help.

Liliana associated her financial need with her family’s (temporary) context as newcomer immigrants, while their lack of education savings demonstrates intersections of class and ethnicity. Interestingly, the unspoken assumptions in Liliana’s statement suggest her middle-class background. Evidently, Liliana had knowledge of and experience with saving for education, and she anticipated that her family would experience financial stability in the future. Stella’s multiple strategies to fund her education included OSAP, “I live off OSAP. I work when I have to. And I don’t depend on my parents if I can help it. Because I know it’s a strain on their finances.” Concern for her parents’ economic stability influenced Stella’s financial decisions (Hernández, 2015). She continued:

I did have some support from my parents, financially. But the rest, I paid for myself, or I got OSAP, and so that was always a consideration back in my mind. Like having to work, or, having to save up, or being very conscious of my expenses.

Participants including Arianna, Liliana, and Stella successfully accessed institutional resources to fund their educational pursuits, resources not employed by other participants such as Elvia and Urracá, who struggled against long-term economic barriers.

Although some participants and their families appreciated the benefits of student loans, others would not accept the additional burden of educational debt (Hernández, 2015). Consider the concepts of “settle for less” and “fear of debt”, embedded within Benita’s working-class Salvadorian culture. She recounted that parents encourage their children to settle for low-paying jobs instead of realizing careers that require PSE studies and the concurrent expenses. Children finish high school—which is free—and then start work, instead of completing post-secondary education—which incurs debt—and then acquire the earnings and benefits post-secondary education often promises. Additionally, Benita’s peers demonstrated their fear of debt when they challenged Benita’s own educational debt accumulation. She recalled, “they’re always asking me, ‘How are you doing it?’ ‘Why are you doing it?’ ‘Aren’t you scared that when you’re done, you’re going to be in so much debt that you won’t be able to pay?’” Working-class fear of educational debt deterred Benita’s Salvadorian peers from post-secondary education for themselves and their children. Nevertheless, Benita confidently maintained that her education was worth the compounding debt, since she expected returns from a well-paying job to counterbalance that incurred debt. Benita sought PSE despite ingrained cultural beliefs about its economic burdens, which demonstrates intersections of ethnicity and class. Several participants indicated that they made education decisions based on their ability to avoid debt (Hernández, 2015), which suggests that settle-for-less and fear-of-debt concepts were not limited to those of working-class, Salvadorian backgrounds.

The economic demands that coincide with PSE are a significant barrier to post-secondary education completion by female Latin American students (Gándara, 2013). About a third of participants spoke openly about their experiences with issues of poverty, while even more participants discussed their economic barriers to education. Participants argued that students are privileged when finances do not dictate the need to work during PSE. Interestingly, the participants who indicated or suggested their families experienced poverty, emphasized the demands of their work responsibilities, while participants with middle-class locations worked also, but with fewer hours and issues. When their families wrestled with poverty, participants such as Rosa and Urracá necessarily balanced the dual roles of wage earner and student as they worked to fund their education and to support their families (Gloria & Castellanos, 2012). Participants realized that education is the



“long-term investment” (Urracá), while work is necessary in the short term to fund their studies, and for some, support their families (Feliciano, 2012; Ovink, 2014). However, students’ work may compromise their schooling, even to the extent that participants would leave their studies to work to support families. Furthermore, analysis revealed the significance of familism and the culture of working to support the family, sometimes at the expense of education.

The systemic structures of classism that prevented most study participants from being “the kids who can spend all day working on assignments” (Elvia) prompted participants and their families to engage a variety of strategies to overcome the economic challenges of PSE. Some sought to increase their self-sufficiency and independence, which would ease their families’ financial burdens (Sy & Romero, 2008; Zalaquett, 2005). Some accepted institutional assistance, including student loans. These options suggest that privilege involves knowledge about and access to systemic and institutional resources, including economic resources (Alemán, 2018). Access to educational information is discussed later in this chapter. This section analyzed participants’ experiences in the context of classed barriers to affordable post-secondary education, which advantaged the education of some, and disadvantaged others. Issues of racialized marginalization in the context of participants’ education are considered next.

### 5.3 Negotiating Institutionalized Racism: “The colour of your skin dictates where you end up.” (Elena)

I ran for student council president with this white girl, and she won. I’m sure she won because the students and teachers in the council really identified with her. I knew that it was something that had to do with race. She was a very wealthy white girl. (Elena)

Despite the diverse student population at her high school, Elena identified complex intersections of racialized, classed processes of privilege that marginalized her.

According to participants, the education system privileges white students, not students of colour. As Vetter, et al. (2011) argue, “school structures tend to ensure that white middle-class students occupy places of privilege, marginalizing working-class and poor students,

and students of color” (p. 188). Participants endured a variety of school structures that racialized them. Here, the following aspects are discussed: Racialization by educators, demonstrated when educators had low expectations of participants and their abilities; segregation, whereby organizational practices marginalized racialized students; and isolation, since participants did not see themselves reflected in their education institutions. These experiences with racialization demonstrate the “channeling and sorting role that institutions can enact” (Núñez, 2014a, p. 50)—which refers to practices that confine students to less challenging education opportunities due to students’ racial and ethnic identities.

### 5.3.1 Privilege and segregation.

When participants spoke directly or indirectly about their experiences with racism within the education system, most participants focused on interpersonal relationships with educators and peers, which privileged white students and racialized students of colour (Gatto, Daly, & Buttu, 2013; Gaztambide-Fernández & Guerrero, 2011; Riegle-Crumb, 2010; Taylor & Fernandez-Bergersen, 2015). As Núñez (2014a) argues, analysis with an Intersubjective Domains of Power lens reveals the “relationships between social actors, and how this conditions life chances and outcomes, such as teachers’ perceptions of students or intergroup relations” (p. 50). Here, an Intersubjective lens examines participants’ experiences with educators and peers in the context of privilege and segregation.

***Educators privileged white students/Educators racialized participants.*** Participants’ accounts of in-class experiences illustrate that relationships between educators and students privileged white students, and not Latin American students. In Samara’s predominantly white, middle-class high school, she confirmed, “the white Canadian students always seemed to be the centre of attention.” Elena recalled, “as much as teachers say they didn’t have a preference, I’m pretty sure they did. Sometimes I feel like they would give more attention to white Canadians, than to us.” Elena found that while her teachers perceived themselves as not racist or they may not have been racist intentionally, their actions were received as racist. In addition to privileging white students, educators were seen to marginalize participants. Luisa recounted, “I had this

one professor that really picked on me. And I don't know if it was racism, but it felt like it was racism. She was very mean to me.... She humiliated me in front of the class."

Regardless of the professor's intent, Luisa indicated that she felt racialized in this situation at the intersections of race and ethnicity. Evidently, participants recognized that educators generally treated white students better than they themselves were treated (Gaztambide-Fernández & Guerrero, 2011). Nicole provided insight into the classroom behaviours of privileged students when she reflected, "the white people have more confidence to speak out about things.... I feel white people, especially men, are more privileged. They're considered smarter. Considered better." Nicole described occurrences of intersections of racial and gender dominance, which Urracá referred to as students who "took up too much space" in class. Furthermore, Urracá argued, such dominance usually goes unchallenged because educators do not possess the skills to address institutional and interpersonal racism.

Participants' experiences with racial marginalization extended beyond in-class challenges; and Benita's detailed account reveals some of the consequences of institutional racism. When Benita recollected a university instructor's racism and the subsequent institutional responses, she began in a slow, quiet manner, at odds with her earlier chatty enthusiasm:

It's really hard to say it, but I feel like I was being [graded] for who I was, not for what I was writing. We had to bring it up to the [Administration]. We got together with all the non-white students .... And, we found that [professor] was marking the ones that are not white, lower .... But it was funny because once we [reported] it, the marks started changing, and I started getting higher marks.

Although the desired response to their challenge was achieved—marks became more representative of students' work—Benita recalled that she and her peers were dissatisfied because the administration denied that racism was at issue, which exacerbated the racism they experienced. Benita reflected:

I almost wanted to quit my PhD, because of that. I went home crying a couple of times. I just felt, minimized. I felt like, "I've worked so hard to get here, and

someone just made my value worth nothing.” That’s what discourages. Because they’re telling me, “I’m not worth it”. It wears you down. It makes you think, “I’m not even spending time with my kids. I’m doing such sacrifices. All this, so somebody can tell me that I’m not good enough.”

Benita identified racism at multiple levels of the organization. This racism challenged her self-worth, her educational persistence, and the value of her education compared to her sacrifices. Benita’s experiences of multiple levels of racism were similar to experiences of the “traumatic events of racism” within the education system that participants identified in a retrospective study about racism experienced in high school (Taylor & Fernandez-Bergersen, 2015). However, participants in that study indicated that they learned to avoid discussion of educational inequalities and not to challenge the system. They, like Benita and her peers, relied on, “the policies, educators, and other factors that contribute to their oppression” (p. 13), those who marked their work, monitored their progress, and oversaw institutional practices. Therefore, instead of confronting racism, they sought to protect themselves from further racialization.

Racism from within the education system has long-term ramifications. Similar to Benita, Nicole appeared still traumatized as she recounted one high school teacher’s damaging behaviour in a not uncommon instance. “When he handed back my final exam, he said, ‘Do you drive?’ And I said, ‘No.’ He’s like, ‘Good! I don’t want to be on the road when you’re driving.’ I guess that’s his way of saying that I’m stupid.” In addition to his bullying, and mocking of her Latin American identity, Nicole was convinced his actions nearly prevented her from fulfilling her life-long dreams of becoming a teacher herself. This teacher’s expressed perceptions about Nicole and her abilities potentially hindered her education and career opportunities. Interestingly, Nicole interpreted these interactions as being driven by her ethnic identity, rather than her teacher’s. Furthermore, neither she nor Benita considered the influence of gender identity on their experiences with educators’ racism.

Benita and Elena among others, maintained that educators generally held low expectations of female Latin American students. Benita recalled:

I went to [guidance] counselling. I had really high marks in high school, and I said, “Okay, what can I do with my life?” He goes, “Oh, you’re going to do like every other Salvadorian girl. You’re going to graduate, and then get pregnant.”

Her counsellor engaged intersections of gender, ethnicity, and perhaps class stereotypes to dismiss Benita’s academic potential. With apparent sarcasm and rebuke, Benita explained, educators’ “idea of a Latina girl is, she’s going to be either a dropout, she’s going to be trouble, or she’s going to end up being pregnant.” Although Benita rejected such deficit-laden projections despite becoming a single mother in her late teens, Elena conceded that in her high school there was some truth behind her teachers’ similar perspectives (Kiyama, Harris, & Dache-Gerbino, 2016; López & Chesney-Lind, 2014). Elena declared, “there’s this stigma that we all get pregnant at a younger age. Especially my high school, most of the Latinas were pregnant by 15, 16.” While many of her peers got pregnant, it was assumed that *all* Latinas would underperform. Elena continued, “I feel like sometimes teachers didn’t really put too much importance on us.... They expected, ‘Okay, around that age they’re going to get pregnant, so they won’t even be here.’” In effect, Elena’s teachers gave up on her and her peers even before the teens conformed to teachers’ low expectations. Moreover, teachers’ expectations of participants including Benita and Elena raise questions about the association between female Latin American students who gave up on education, and educators who gave up on these students.

Since Benita and Elena did not discuss these gender issues in the intersections of social class locations, it is not clear whether or not teachers’ perceptions of Latin American students’ abilities were impacted by intersections of ethnic identity and social class locations. Regardless, participants including Benita, Elena, and Sofia recognized the racism embedded in the low academic expectations of Latin American students that educators held (Gatto, Daly, & Buttu, 2013; Gaztambide-Fernández & Guerrero, 2011; González, Stoner, & Joal, 2003; Kiyama et al., 2016; Taylor & Fernandez-Bergersen, 2015). Sofia for example, fumed that some of her professors were surprised at her intelligence (Lopez, 2005) while Nicole believed that her French professor accused her of cheating amid assumptions that she was not smart enough to achieve her high marks.

Participants argued that educators' questioning of their intelligence was racist since they believed educators would not similarly question white students' performance. Thus, female Latin American students were "publicly imaged" (Núñez, 2014a, p. 66) by educators as underperformers, and this imaging conflicted with participants' self-identities. Urracá concluded with hindsight that, "maybe the teachers saw me as a poor, racialized immigrant," while Benita and Elena maintained that Latin Americans are perceived as academically unmotivated, absent academic goals, or deficient in the attitudes necessary for academic success. Correspondingly, educators did not push Latin American students hard enough, according to participants such as Elena and Liliana. As Elena mused, "I feel like [teachers] had a pre-[conceived] notion of, 'these people are going to drop out of school, so really, why [work hard with them]?'". Thus, participants understood that educators' racist perceptions of them meant that teachers had low academic expectations of them.

In addition to the racialization by educators that they experienced themselves, participants maintained that their parents were included in educators' racism. For example, Elena recounted:

My teachers would be like, "Your first language isn't English. So, I have to talk down to you." So that's what I've noticed a lot. They categorize also your parents with that too. It's not just you, it's also your parents.

Elena asserted that teachers projected low expectations of Latin American students and their parents. Benita's position as a mother of Latin American children provides this study with unique insight into educators' attitudes about Latin American students and parents. From her interactions with her children's teachers, Benita protested that teachers, "treat you like you don't speak [English], or you don't understand, their language." Benita experienced teachers talking "down" to her because of her identity. Educators' beliefs and attitudes were reflected in participants' parents' marginalization within the education system. Moreover, Elvia, Mayra, Sofia, and Urracá indicated that teachers had limited knowledge of immigrant family issues, experiences, and needs. Consider that their parents' (in)ability to assist with homework was a common issue, particularly when

parents were not fluent in English. Yet educators were unaware of immigrant families' challenges or needs. The marginalization that participants and their families endured from educators constitutes "institutional neglect and abuse" (Gonzales et al., 2003, p. 166). For example, such treatment contradicts Ontario norms and standards for institutional practices (Ontario, 2017).

In response to educators' perceptions, Elvia and Elena sought to protect their parents during parent-teacher interactions. Elvia explained, "at parent-teacher interviews, [parents] would have a harder time understanding my teachers. I didn't want them to be embarrassed or humiliated, when they couldn't help me with my homework." While Elena declared:

I would never want to bring my parents [to parent-teacher meetings]. It's not the fact that I got embarrassed, it's that I felt embarrassed for them. You know [the way] that teachers talk, the way they approach you, is a little bit different than the way they would approach someone that was born and raised here.

As Elena explained, she was not embarrassed *of* her parents, but embarrassed *for* them, because teachers marginalized her parents. Elena presumed that at the intersection of race and ethnicity, white/Canadian parents experienced more respectful assumptions from teachers than her own parents experienced. Furthermore, these challenges raise questions about the intersections of class in these experiences. For example, participants with middle class locations, including Arianna, Stella, and Valentina, did not discuss issues with educators who privileged and oppressed Latin American students and their parents.

***Institutional segregation and racism.*** Participants also identified institutional segregation practices that marginalized students according to ingrained perceptions of low expectations. Practices included tracking, which funnels students into classes according to students' perceived abilities (Taylor & Fernandez-Bergersen, 2015) and English as a Second Language (ESL) programming (also referred to as English Language Learning). ESL provides English language development support according to perceived ability, in classes separate from the English-speaking students. Participants protested that

institutional segregation practices were racially and/or ethnically motivated. For example, although she spoke French fluently, Urracá declared:

I was put in the course with students who weren't doing so well. It happened to be all the racialized folks. We *all* noticed. The Black students noticed. Right away, "How come all the black kids are in this class? What the hell!"

Understandably, the students believed that they were segregated according to racial identity rather than academic ability. Rosa's discussion of her tracking experiences revealed similar racial segregation issues. She recalled:

I was put into a General course .... All the Black kids, all the Latino kids were put in General. It's called tracking? .... We would always get bad marks, and I would see that the white kids would get good marks.

Rosa recognized that students of colour were sorted (Núñez, 2014a) into General courses, which streamed students away from university-preparation opportunities, and toward college and work preparation courses (Taylor & Fernandez-Bergersen, 2015).

Rosa's experiences are consistent with findings from research such as one study whereby high school students realized that since they were not attending "regular classes" they were less likely to be tracked into post-secondary preparation classes (González, Stoner, & Joval, 2003, p. 158). Rosa confirmed, "there was a lot of segregation. That was definitely racial discrimination." Elena, Rosa, and Urracá attributed such segregation to systemic racism. Consider Elena's reasoning:

They categorize us based on either our colour or our race, instead of how we learn.... It's not the way you learn, it's not that they see, "She's a visual learner." It's, "She comes from parents that are immigrants, so she's probably not getting this at home." But yet, that may not be the situation at all. I'm pretty sure it's that, "I learned at a different speed than the rest of your students. But you categorized me more on the way I look, and where my parents come from."



Elena concluded that the segregation she experienced was racially and ethnically motivated, rather than academically determined. However, these participants did not consider the potential implications and influences of their class locations and their experiences with poverty on these experiences. Furthermore, middle-class participants did not discuss similar issues of racial segregation within their education institutions, although some middle-class participants spoke of segregation through ESL.

Some participants argued that ESL programming was an institutional method to segregate Latin American students. Isabel and Liliana who, despite their needs as new English language learners, each chose to bypass grade 9 ESL and instead enrolled in regular, English-only grade 9 classes. They preferred English-only education that integrated them with the English-speaking school population. English grade 9 enabled them to learn English faster than they may have, segregated in ESL. Isabel argued against academic need as a motive for ESL segregation, “it’s stupid what they do, in [ESL] education. When you don’t know the language and they put you in a room with people that speak the same language as you. You’re not actually learning English; you’re learning your own language more.” Interestingly, Isabel spoke Spanish and French fluently when she turned down Grade 9 ESL programming.

Isabel and Liliana identified ESL as a discriminatory segregation strategy that isolated students, hindered integration, and slowed students’ academic progress. These findings are consistent with those from González et al. (2003), where low expectations of participants coincided with being tracked through ESL. Interestingly, the position taken by Isabel and Liliana contradicts that of other study participants; significantly, none of the participants who actually attended ESL programming challenged the validity of the program, and instead embraced their ESL opportunities. Stella for example reminisced that one of her ESL teachers remained a supportive mentor, even after Stella had left the program. Perhaps expectations about ESL were influenced by their social locations, since Isabel and Liliana have well-educated families and middle-class locations. In comparison, some of the study participants who attended ESL, including Canadian born Elena and Samara, had families with less education-system experience than Isabel and Liliana, and had working-class social locations.

Participants determined that their ethnic and racial identities rather than their academic needs influenced segregation decisions, which resulted in tracking and ESL experiences. Low expectations and tracking that prevent access to post-secondary education opportunities (Taylor & Fernandez-Bergersen 2015) constitute “institutional neglect and abuse” (González et al., 2003), that may influence participants’ career opportunities and class mobility (Núñez, 2014a). It was Liliana who recognized that several years in ESL segregation had the potential for long-term consequences that could inhibit or prevent students from attending university. This understanding may have been a product of her middle-class location and the influence of her parents’ own PSE experiences. As Núñez (2014a) concludes, “organizationally, educational tracking and channeling into lower-level educational postsecondary opportunities presents significant inequality in Latinos’ chances of economic mobility” (p. 68). Another aspect of racial segregation in education involves the multi-layered predominance of white people, discussed next.

### 5.3.2 Isolation and the predominance of white people.

Participants characterized the predominance of white people in their education institutions as one factor that marginalized them as Latin American students, and inhibited their academic pursuits (Gibson & Hidalgo, 2009; Gloria & Castellanos, 2012; Lopez, 2005). Note that in keeping with research scholarship about Latin American students (see for example, Gloria & Castellanos, 2012; Lopez, 2005; Marx, 2008), the term “predominantly white” and similar variations are engaged here to denote educational contexts that are white-dominant. In this discussion, predominantly white refers to contexts with a majority of white students, a majority of white educators, and curricula that prioritized white/western perspectives. Significantly, regardless of their immigration backgrounds, social class locations, or childhood communities, all participants identified issues of marginalization from their experiences in predominantly white education institutions.

***Students: “You don’t see Latin students” (Stella).*** Participants’ K-12 schools had varying degrees of ethnic/racial diversity among students. Some participants such as Elena, Luisa, and Stella noted that there were many Latin American students in their high schools. Luisa explained, “in high school there was a lot more diversity. There was just a

lot of everything, a lot of different races.” Other participants, Isabel, Mayra, and Nicole for example, confirmed that most of their high school peers were white. Most participants commented on the dominance of white students in at least one of the education institutions they attended, and most knew of few Latin American students in their post-secondary institutions. While Nicole complained, “I haven’t met any Latina girls in [university]”, Arianna admitted, “I don’t know anyone else who’s Latin, right now. I wish. Honestly, that’s something that I kind of regret, my [limited] knowledge of more people from Latin America.” Once she began university, Stella soon realized that there were few “Latin kids” attending her institution:

At [University], I didn’t see Latin students. I could probably count on my hand the number of Latin students in my program.... Even walking through [University], you don’t see Latin students.... I remember very clearly noticing, especially when I started, just not seeing any Latin kids. Like, whenever I saw a Latin person, they stood out, because it was so rare.

Stella’s awareness of few Latin American people at her university was in stark contrast with her high school, where she had many Latin American peers. Most participants noted that there were few Latin American students in their university classes, programs, or institutions.

Some participants identified the challenges of predominantly white contexts. For example, participants who were immersed in white communities growing up struggled to make sense of their own ethnic identities when few Latin American students were in their schools. Urracá, who as a child lived in a predominantly white suburb of Montreal, had yearned for the company of other Spanish-speaking students. She recollected:

It was a very lonely experience being a Latina woman.... And, when you hear another kid speak Spanish, you gravitate towards them. Instantly! Even though you have *nothing* in common with them besides that both of you speak Spanish. And then, you hang onto them like glue.

With hindsight, Urracá realized that she sought to make connections with Latin American peers at school because of the potential for cultural connections. Reflecting on her childhood, Urracá recognized her need for representation of Latin American identity within her school settings, saying, “there are so few of us that I can’t make sense of what [ethnic identity] means, if I don’t see it in society.” She questioned the possibility of developing her ethnic identity without Latin American community influences and role models. Sofia too reflected on her predominantly white school experiences, and later regretted the absence of Latin American peers and their influences on her identity development. She mused, “I never really got to grow up with [Latin Americans]. I didn’t have very many Spanish friends. I don’t know who I would have been, had I had that influence.” Sofia sensed the missed ethnic influences on her identity development.

Predominantly white institutions served to emphasize participants’ racialized and minoritized identities (Vetter et al., 2011). Luisa explained:

In my first year, I felt like an outsider. Not like I didn’t belong there, but it was just, more, I stood out.... This is the first time I was minority I guess. Because in high school, it didn’t feel like I was, because there were a lot of immigrants.

As Luisa struggled to establish her identity within her university’s predominantly white student population, her high school’s racial and ethnic diversity enabled her to recognize and compare institutional differences. Interestingly, Mayra compared student diversity within different university fields of study, which influenced her experiences of feeling like a minority person. Mayra explained:

When I was in sciences, [it was] very, very diverse, because everybody wants to be a doctor. You have people from ... every walk of life in a science classroom. There’s *never* a shortage of diversity. And then [in Education], it was surprising, I was really part of a true minority. There’s not a lot of people of colour.

Mayra recognized the field-dependent “diversity” that she experienced in her university as a systemic racism issue, although throughout our interview she did not refer specifically to the terms, “race” or “racism”.

Participants' experiences in contexts that emphasized their racial and ethnic identities, are similar to research findings by Gloria and Castellanos (2012), who explain:

As one of few Latina/o students on a predominantly White college campus, [participants] often feel different from their White peers and feel that they “stand out” as one of only a few Latina/os on campus or an “outsider” to their educational experiences. Students subsequently question whether something is wrong with them or internalize feelings of “differentness” as some deficiency or deviance on their part.... they may have internalized self-doubt and questions about their decision to go to school, their capabilities, and ‘whether it was worth it.’” (p. 91).

As participants including Luisa and Mayra indicated, their identities as women of colour were over-emphasized in predominantly white educational institutions. Contrary to the Gloria and Castellanos (2012) findings though, participants did not discuss feelings of deficiency and self-doubt that they experienced as a consequence of predominantly white contexts.

The education system plays a “critical role in obscuring and obstructing” ethnic identity (Sánchez, 2001, p. 377). Predominantly white education institutions left Sofia and other participants isolated, which is consistent with research findings that predominantly white education institutions contested students' ethnic identity, marginalized students, and challenged their academic persistence (Lopez, 2005; McWhirter et al., 2013, for example). As Gloria and Castellanos (2012) argue, Latin American students, “struggle with a sense of isolation as they are not always reflected in classes, on campus in general, or with university staff and faculty” (p. 91). The predominance of white students marginalized and racialized Latin American students and challenged their academic (and identity) confidence. Valenzuela (1999) characterizes such processes as “subtractive schooling”, whereby racialized students—such as Latin American students—experienced loss of ethnic identity in response to their efforts to adapt to school norms. Conversely, in her study with African American girls in a predominantly-white Catholic high school, Carter Andrews (2009) found that the participants were high achieving in part because of

their “racial group pride”. Identity pride enabled them to focus on their studies and influenced their achievement. Furthermore, participants in Carter Andrews’ (2009) study demonstrated resistance to their racialization, which they translated into academic achievement (Abada & Tenkorang, 2009).

Interestingly, Elena offers unique insight into the impact of power imbalances among student peers, and isolation within educational contexts from the power reversal she experienced in her university Spanish classes. Elena recalled:

[We] exclude the white people, because that’s the only time where [we]’re the majority. So, [we] would talk in Spanish, or make jokes.... Between me and my friends that are actually from parents that are Latino. We close ourselves off. I feel like in that sense, we switch roles. We become the higher people. Because we are a head start of [them] on the language. For the first time, I feel like I’m better than [white peers].

Elena attributed the role of “higher people” and “better” to white students except in this reversal of power. She enjoyed the feelings of empowerment that came from her knowledge, skills, and experiences, which were clearly superior to those of her white peers. Even though white peers were in the majority, they were not dominant. Her position replicated white position and power that she had been subordinate to in predominantly white classes, programs, and institutions. However, she experienced no transference of power and privilege to other contexts; Elena’s power vanished once she exited her Spanish classroom. Moreover, while there were more Latin American students in Elena’s high school compared to her university Spanish classes, Elena did not express similar heady experiences with power in high school. This suggests there were other factors that affected these contexts of power, such as the identity or influence of educators.

***Educators: “You can’t be what you can’t see!” (Urracá).*** Urracá lamented the absence and influence of role models, and believed that educators of colour, and preferably Latin American women, would have provided her with much-needed supports during her schooling. Most of their K-12 and post-secondary educators were white, according to

participants including Nicole, Rosa, and Samara. Elena for example, claimed that in most high schools in Toronto, most teachers are white. Additionally, as the B.Ed. Program experiences of Mayra and Nicole revealed, their peer cohort groups were predominantly white, which suggests that white-educator homogeneity is a systemic phenomenon. Participants protested that the predominantly white racial homogeneity of teachers and professors was detrimental to their education. Nicole responded from her positions as a student and as a teacher when she speculated that teacher diversity would be better, “because [teachers] probably would have understood more. They would have had more of an idea of what immigrant children, not just Latin American children, were going through.” Nicole believed that faculty representation (Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2012) influences academic well-being, expecting that immigrant students and teachers with immigration experience would share a culture (Hall, 1997b) that white educators would not.

These findings are supported by research about the benefits of students of colour engaging with educators of similar ethnocultural identities (Gándara, 2013; Gibson & Hidalgo, 2009; Gloria & Castellanos, 2012 for example). In her case study of Latin American young women, Gándara (2013) determines that “Latino educators” increased participants’ chances of going to post-secondary education, particularly when these teachers could communicate with parents and encourage daughters to attend PSE. Furthermore, as Gloria and Castellanos (2012) argue, “having same-race/ethnicity faculty who are succeeding has a powerful and salient impact on the students’ sense of personal and academic self efficacy as well as overall well-being; thus, it is encouraging for students to see other Latina/os succeed.” (p. 91). Not only do representative educators offer information and support, they are also role models. Later, Gloria and Castellanos (2012) conclude, “individuals who reflect Latinas as cultural beings and ultimately provide access and knowledge of resources are essential to Latina students’ educational successes” (p. 93). Teachers who develop caring relationships with students, and who understand, “where the students are coming from and the challenges they face, who speak the home language of the students (which in the present case means Spanish), and who can either directly provide, or connect students with, the resources they need” (Gibson & Hidalgo, 2009, p. 703) are important. Evidently, research with Latin American students

identifies the benefits of educator representation, whereby students see themselves reflected in the identity of their educators (Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2012).

Although participants had little influence over the racial diversity in their K-12 classrooms, as PSE students they had more autonomy to negotiate some aspects of their learning environments to counteract issues of racial homogeneity. Urracá for example, selected courses according to specific instructors, and preferred professors of colour, and particularly women of colour. She rationalized:

I feel safer. I feel like maybe they may understand me. And, in every relationship, there is a power. There's already a power relation with a student and teacher. So, if we can flatten the power relation as much as possible, I think the relationship is better, because then it's not an authoritative relationship. I feel if I find [a] common denominator in our identity, it really helps me with my learning process.

As a woman of colour in a racialized system, Urracá recognized the importance of managing power dynamics, and kindling “mutual respect” to facilitate her learning. After her own struggles with systemic racism, Rosa too felt compelled to access more faculty of colour. Rosa transferred universities to protect herself from Ontario's white-dominant PSE faculties. Some participants anticipated that racially diverse faculty enhanced their academic opportunities and results (Gándara, 2013; Sayman, 2013), and acted to maximize their opportunities. Benita, Rosa, and Urracá spoke openly and emphatically about racism within their PSE institutions, and their challenges to the inequities they experienced there. Perhaps the similarities in their working-class locations and their contexts as graduate students influenced their decisions to challenge inequities.

It is important to acknowledge that participants such as Rosa, Sofia, and Urracá believed that they would have been better understood, been exposed to less significant and fewer student-educator power imbalances, and thus been more successful academically with a greater proportion of Latin American educators in their education institutions. However, participants' preferences for educators with ethnic and/or racial identities similar to their own raise two issues; the essentialization of identity, and the ineffectiveness of educator representation to challenge systemic racism (Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2010, 2012).



Participants' preferences for educator representation essentializes the identities of peoples of colour (Hall, 1996b; Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2010, 2012), in this case Latin American educators, and denies the diversity of Latin American identities (addressed in Chapters 1 and 4, and at length in Appendix A). Moreover, Hall (1996b) raises the issue of diversities of class, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity. For not only is it necessary to avoid racial essentialization, but it is also necessary to avoid gender, class, and sexuality essentializations, among others.

A commonly held solution to marginalization such as described by study participants, in this case to increase the number of female Latin American educators, is predicated on essentialist assumptions about Latin American identities, and expectations that individuals create inequitable institutions, rather than system-defined inequities. As Martino and Rezai-Rashti (2010) argue, "while the issue of teacher representation in terms of gender and race is important, it is not sufficient to address some of the structural and institutional inequalities encountered by students in schools." (p. 260). Therefore, although participants' experiences and understandings reveal that the predominance of white educators in their educational institutions is problematic for them, increased faculty diversity would not address their challenges with "structural and institutional inequalities". Importantly, issues of educator homogeneity were identified by participants who had experiences with poverty, yet not by participants with middle-class backgrounds. Class analysis in future research about educator homogeneity issues and impacts on Latin American students' educational persistence would provide further intersectional information about student/teacher relationships.

Significantly, participants including Elvia, Liliana, Sofia, and Stella recognised that not all their educators racialized them or produced barriers that inhibited their learning or academic progress. Instead, some (white) educators recognized and encouraged their academic potential. Elvia recalled, "my high school had a lot of immigrants in it, so all the teachers were very welcoming and understanding." Teacher support was the norm,

rather than the exception. Stella too recounted teacher kindness during her transition from Colombia to Canada. She explained:

I was very shy, and I was very scared. So, I didn't talk. At all. But the teacher was very caring. She would check in on me. And she would talk to me.... My teacher ended up being a very important person in my life.

Stella relied on her teacher's support and caring during and after her transition. These participants' experiences are consistent with earlier findings (Gibson & Hidalgo, 2009; Harris & Kiyama, 2015; Rolón-Dow, 2005; Sapp et al., 2016, for example) that demonstrate the value of caring and supportive educators who encourage Latin American students to value education, and to value themselves. For example, from their qualitative study about Latina's educational agency, Sapp, Kiyama, and Dache-Gerbinao (2016) found that, "all it took was one institutional agent who cared for the Latinas to provide not only institutional support, but important institutional resources, ultimately leading to persistence and enhanced educational opportunities" (p. 47). In other words, Latin American students need caring and supportive teachers to persist in education.

***Curricular disconnect: "What about us?" (Samara).*** Curricular content was another aspect of systemic marginalization, whereby participants found themselves marginalized by Eurocentric school curricula. Nicole recalled, "As a Latina, it was very hard to be motivated in school sometimes. Because nothing I was learning had any connection to me." Rosa too realized, "One of the challenges was that, we never got to learn about our own culture in school. Nothing." Samara, who found history "very boring", was critical of curricular content. She explained, "it was just like, 'Okay, that's what happened to them.' What about us? Bring other cultures into education. I know we're in Canada, and we learn Canadian history. But it's not exciting!" Participants felt bored and disconnected from educational content that did not represent them. Nicole attributed intersections of racial and ethnic identity to curricular disconnect when she concluded, "all the teachers I had were white, English speaking. They didn't really teach anything about anything else." While participants persisted despite this marginalization, their interpretations indicate their preferences for diverse curricula to include issues and perspectives relevant

to them, which would enhance their educational engagement and perhaps their educational persistence. Consider for example Elvia's teacher, who incorporated translations from the works of Nobel Prize winning Colombian author Gabriel Garcia Márquez into her English class. Elvia enthused, "that was a really neat way for the Canadian students to learn about Spanish literature, and the Latino students learning about our culture, and of everyone coming together." Elvia recognized the Intersubjective and pedagogical benefits of her teacher's efforts to incorporate culturally relevant learning that built intersubjective connections between students.

Participants described being Othered, isolated, and racialized in predominantly white institutions. Participants experienced isolation as minority students; they sought diverse role models in their educators, and the curricula was less engaging than it could have been. Perhaps Nicole, Urracá and other participants have been socialized to believe that Latin American educators more like them would educate them more effectively, and thus would lessen or prevent their experiences of being isolated and racialized in the education system. However, while increased educator representation might ensure that individual students, including study participants, feel less isolated within the education system, this strategy would not address issues of structural and institutional inequalities (Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2012). Next, participants' negotiations of their intersectional identities are discussed in the context of racialized identities and relationships.

### 5.3.3 Negotiated identities and negotiated relationships

Do whatever you can to show the world that you are not just defined by  
what your name is, or what your skin colour is, or how you talk.  
There's a lot more to you. (Nicole)

Nicole maintained her identity on her own terms, despite past challenges to her racial and ethnic identity. Students who demonstrate strong ethnic and racial identities are more motivated and engaged in school, and they are better able to meet challenges to their racial identity (Carter Andrews, 2009; Conchas, 2006), such as the challenges experienced by Nicole and other participants. Furthermore, "navigating the system was motivated by the participants' need to cope with racism and the barriers they encountered" due to their identities (Taylor & Fernandez-Bergersen, 2015, p. 20).

Participants' negotiations of their intersectional identities are discussed in the context of racialized identities and relationships. Beginning with negotiated ethnicity through language, Mayra's discussion provides insight into the depths of her efforts to negotiate her ethnic identity. Next, participants' negotiation of their identity in the context of whiteness illustrates how participants preferred, rejected, and navigated white identity, particularly in the context of their negotiated peer relationships.

***Negotiated ethnicity.*** As established in the previous chapter, participants demonstrated that Spanish language fluency is an important aspect of their ethnic identity. However, speaking Spanish and accented English signifies difference. Interestingly, Mayra recounted in detail how she engaged spoken language and accented English to negotiate her identity in various contexts:

Hearing my peers, I just heard and listened to how they pronounced things. Whereas coming home, I hear my parents pronounce words. Like, my dad says *turkey* like *tourrrrkey*. And, both of them say words weird. But I'm like, "That's wrong!" I knew, "my peers don't say it that way. So, I'm not going to say it that way." So then whenever I talk to family, friends from both sides, that speak English, I hear the drastic difference.

Mayra identified "drastic" differences between English speakers such as her school friends, and the English spoken by her Spanish- and Filipino-speaking family members. Furthermore, Mayra recognized that accented English signifies difference. She continued:

I [now] have a very, very anglicized voice, that's very clear and succinct. The accent is very different. So sometimes when I'm with my family members, I try and tone down my English-sounding voice, or my normal sounding voice. That's normal in the schools, and normal in professional conversations, I tone it down. So, I try not to be as clear and enunciate every word. So that's part of what I see as adapting to the norm. And then that's part of the reason my teachers can understand me. So that I can ... stand up for myself and be taken seriously.

Mayra negotiated her identity at school by assimilating; she affected white/Canadian English language fluency and masking her ethnic identity by scrubbing her accent from her speech.

Mayra developed her “normal” speaking style in English-dominant contexts and concurrently concealed or rejected expression of her ethnic identity that would be evident from her accent. She crafted a “clear and succinct” anglicized speaking style to remove signifiers of difference, to project a normal, professional identity, and to be “taken seriously” at school. Thus, Mayra modified her speech patterns, to “adapt to the norm”, at least, the norm of Canadians. She explained, “I just spoke English. So, I was just part of everybody.” Her English-speaking fluency was a tool for assimilation and normalcy in her interactions with her white Canadian school peers. Meanwhile, Mayra then tailored her speech to facilitate understanding by her family members. Through these processes, Mayra demonstrates her understanding of the power and privilege found in language, which establishes borders to separate those with or without privilege. Thus, she negotiated her ethnic identity in educational contexts by projecting an identity devoid of ethnicity markers found in accents. As Gibson and Hidalgo (2009) argue, “those who learn how to become skillful border crossers and navigators have an advantage in school both socially and academically” (p. 704), an advantage that Mayra sought.

Mayra reaped the rewards of skillfully navigating the borders of white privilege and assumed a position of advantage in different educational contexts. Similar to participants in other studies (Gibson & Hidalgo, 2009; Taylor & Fernandez-Bergersen, 2015 for example), Mayra assimilated into the dominant culture to negotiate her educational well being (Taylor & Fernandez-Bergersen, 2015). Conversely, research determined that maintaining Latin American ethnic identity including Spanish language proficiency provided a protective factor for Latin American students, particularly for girls (Colón, & Sánchez, 2010). For example, Urracá negotiated her identity by learning about her ethnic, national, and cultural background, and she engaged it as resistance to racialization.

***Negotiated whiteness.*** Sofia openly articulated her childhood desires to be white. She explained, “I always wanted to be white. I always wanted to because it was the norm. It

was what was normal. What people accepted.” Sofia openly discussed her preference for whiteness, a process that was influenced by the belief that white was the accepted norm and that her identity was not. Sofia recollected:

I’ve always felt like maybe if I was white, I would be perfect. I would have blue eyes. So, I always as a kid wanted to be white.... When I was younger, I always saw white people as superior. Always. I always thought, “White people are better than me. They’re better than all people of colour.” I almost felt *ashamed* to not be white.

Sofia identified specific attributes of “normal”, “perfect”, and “superior” white identity and internalized her Othered identity with “shame”. Sofia reflected:

I just remember not fitting in very well. Then as I got older, in high school, I was still kind of ashamed of my, not being white.... It’s not that I ever looked down upon people of colour. It was just that, I felt, none of us really fit in. Because we weren’t white and that we should have been white.

Through social interactions at school, Sofia internalized the superiority of whiteness, and the marginalization of people of colour. Adoption of a white identity would have enabled Sofia to better navigate her white-dominant education.

Sofia’s negotiation of her identity in the context of whiteness demonstrates the dynamic nature of racial identity, which for Sofia at least, demonstrates that her racial identity changed over time. Despite Sofia’s admitted childhood desire to be white, in adulthood Sofia vehemently rejected being positioned as white. She exclaimed:

I *hate* being called white! I *hate* being told that I’m white! I’m like, “I’m not white though!” .... I don’t like to be considered white. I don’t think of myself as white. I don’t think white people think of me as white.... But then, people of colour are telling me, “No, you’re not a person of colour.” But a white person won’t tell me I’m white. I’m stuck in the middle, It’s like I don’t know how to identify.

Like Nicole who argued that despite her white skin tone she is not white, Sofia too self-identified as a woman of colour. Yet Sofia was caught in the interstice (Bhabha, 1994), and realized that her self-perceptions differed from those who had power to label her. Sofia's rejection of white identity exposed her disillusionment about white identity:

I don't like to be identified as white because there's *so* much negative stigma towards [being white]. And I don't think that all white people are bad, or that all white people are racist.... I don't like to think of myself as ignorant.... It's embarrassing to me. For someone to *assume* that, because of my skin tone, I must be a certain way.

Sofia sought to renegotiate her identity and rejected her childhood beliefs that whiteness signified "normal", "perfect", and "accepted". As an adult Latin American, Sofia found that whiteness signified "negative stigma", "racist", and "ignorant". Thus, she wanted to gain control of how her identity is framed, and she rejected the cultural attributes she ascribed to White ethnicity.

According to Anthias (2002) "narratives of location are structured more in terms of a denial through a rejection of what one is *not* rather than a clear and unambiguous formulation of what one *is*" (p. 501, emphasis original), thus, the self is defined by the rejection of particular attributes. Recall the vehemence of both Sofia and Nicole, who insisted that despite perceptions, they are "not white". Hall (1996a) concludes, "identities can function as points of identification and attachment only because of their capacity to exclude, to leave out, to render 'outside', abjected" (p. 5). The identity comparisons that participants enact are necessary to define their self-identity, particularly in the educational contexts of racism that they described. Furthermore, participants' racial identities are dynamic, and dynamic identity may be influenced by a variety of factors and contexts that include socio-economic status, racism experienced, and education levels (Stokes-Brown, 2012).

Perhaps Mayra's efforts to assimilate are as powerful as Sofia's preference for and then rejection of white identity. Though her high school population was diverse, Mayra reported that she, "hung out with my white friends from elementary school into high

school. I never regarded myself as different when I hung out with them.” Mayra viewed herself as more similar to her white friends than her Filipino and Latin American peers; she highlighted similarities with white peers, and downplayed differences. Mayra sought to assimilate and be “normal”, by straightening her hair and affecting Canadian speech mannerisms, while concurrently masking her Latin American and Filipino identities. Consider that Mayra was relieved when classroom teachers allowed her to freely associate with her peers as “just part of the class”, while teachers expected the other students of Filipino or Latin American origins to remain in same-ethnic groupings. Perhaps significantly, several times during our conversation Mayra referred to both Filipino and Latin American peers as “they”, which suggests that she differentiated herself from them. Hovering in the space between her same-ethnic peers and her white peers, Mayra sought to be more like her white peers, and believed herself to be so. Mayra’s identity negotiation at the intersections of racial and ethnic identity, clearly demonstrate her efforts to assimilate.

These findings are similar to other studies, whereby identity negotiation is contextually reliant, or as Kiang and Fuligni (2009) determined from the young adults in their study that, “identity is a relationally dynamic construct” (p. 739). Hall (1996a) argues that identity is not fixed but constructed from difference, which “entails the radically disturbing recognition that it is only through the relation to the Other, the relation to what it is not, to precisely what it lacks” (Hall, 1996a, p. 4). Hall’s argument is evident in Sofia’s experiences, where as a youngster she found herself lacking and defined herself as Other, while in later adolescence into adulthood she rejected white identity and maintains she is “not white”. Similar to the experiences of Nicole and Sofia, some participants in Fergus’ (2009) study were perceived as white, although participants saw themselves as ethnically Latin American. Exploring the relevance of skin colour and identity in his study of Mexican and Puerto Rican students, the research reveals that Latin American students’ identity is influenced by skin colour, and skin colour designations have different meanings. Those students who were identified as white or light were challenged because they were made to feel like they didn’t belong to their ethnic community. They struggled to retain their power to self-identify.



The preferences for whiteness experienced by Sofia and Mayra were influenced by their past beliefs that white was the norm and their identities did not fit that norm (Raby, 2004). Furthermore, their identity negotiation (Stokes-Brown, 2012) of assimilation with white identity (Taylor & Fernandez-Bergersen, 2015) enabled them to navigate the education system, although identity negotiation also suppressed aspects of their ethnic identities (Bettie, 2014; Venzant Chambers et al., 2015). In this study, participants find the boundaries of self and other, same and difference, to produce the self (Anthias, 2002, p. 497). This is evidenced in Sofia's efforts to produce her identity, which she came to accept when her Latin American and white peers rejected her as Other. Accordingly, identity negotiation is dynamic and contextual.

The previous chapter introduced white-washed as an identity that situated participants in the interstice between their ethnic identity and white/Canadian identity. Some participants were able to negotiate white-washed identities. Valentina declared, "I'm fairly white-washed for a Colombian person." Valentina recognized her white-washed Colombian identities, and acknowledged, even embraced, white-washed as her own identity. Valentina described herself as, "a pretty white-washed version of [Colombian]. Because I mean, I have a lot of North American values, and I'm not the stereotypical Latina." Although she found that her Colombian identity has been diluted by North American/white values, Valentina located her identity at the intersection of dynamic ethnic and racial spaces. Interestingly, Isabel likened white-washed identity to a Green Card—which grants permanent residency privileges in the U.S.—"It's kind of like your green card in a way. To be able to be both. It's a good way of putting it. Green carding." Isabel's white-washed identity delivered negotiated access to both Colombian and white identities. Furthermore, she successfully navigated both with her ambiguous identity (Zarete et al., 2005). These findings are in keeping with research that explored issues of Latin American students' identity negotiations; they adapted ethnic identity and adopted dominant community norms (Barajas & Pierce, 2001; see also Kiang & Fuligni, 2009; Taylor & Fernandez-Bergersen, 2015). Similarly, participants including Isabel, Stella, and Valentina negotiated their ethnic and racial identities, albeit in different ways. Perhaps the middle-class perspectives of Isabel, Stella, and Valentina encouraged their identity autonomy.

***Negotiated peer relationships: Misfits, mis-matched, floaters, outcast and alone.***

Participants also negotiated their identities through peer relationships. Intersectional analysis of the Intersubjective Domain, in this case peer relationships, reveals some of the dynamic complexities and negotiations of participants' peer relationships. Several participants recalled how they and their friend groups were marginalized within their high school peer hierarchies. Some groups were "misfits" (Liliana), "mixed"—Elvia's group of friends with different "white-washed" ethnicities— and "outcast and alone" (Nicole). Nicole, whose high school population was predominantly white, reflected:

I always feel stuck. I feel like I don't really fit in with my white friends. We have stuff in common, but they'll never really understand, *my* life or *my* perspective, because their families have been here forever, they're not immigrants. And then the Latinas, who I feel closer with, they don't want to have anything to do with me, because I don't speak Spanish.

Nicole was caught in the interstice (Bhabha, 1994), where white friends could not relate to or understand her life experiences, while she could not associate with the Spanish-speaking peers who would not communicate with her. Elena and Samara identified themselves as interstitial (Bhabha, 1994) floaters between groups. Elena explained, "I had my group of people where we'd just hang out. And then, I'd also talk to the people that *weren't* as popular. I would hang out with them too. I just felt like I could float [between]." Stella's friend group was a "miss-matched" group of "all types of people". Interestingly, while white students dominated Valentina's K-12 schooling, she had more diversity from which to choose her university friends, and her university peer group consisted of a mix of immigrant and exchange students. Evidently, participants negotiated their peer relationships within the social margins.

Although several participants mentioned that they interacted with Latin American peers, participants including Elena and Mayra intentionally avoided their high school Latin American peers. For example, Elena reasoned:

I felt like I didn't fit in. They'd take their Latino-ism to another level. Where I was like, "that's not me. I know I'm Latina, but I just kind of go with it."

Sometimes I didn't even identify as [Latina]. They had their curly hair, with their make-up, and their earrings.... I was trying to, *not* be a stereotype.

Elena asserted her identity differences (Hall, 1996a) from other Latin American girls, and “didn’t want to end up like them” or conform to their gender stereotypes (Kiyama et al., 2016; Ojeda, Navarro, Meza, & Arbona, 2012). Elena rejected the hyper-sexualization and promiscuity of her Latina peers, which is consistent with findings from research, whereby participants negotiated their identities by rejecting stereotyped perceptions of Latin American young women (Kiyama et al., 2016 for example). Instead, Elena preferred to focus on her academic studies during high school. However, Elena admitted that she “felt like I wasn’t accepted by my own kind.” Like Elena, Elvia and Samara too found that they were not accepted by their Latin American school peers (Ojeda, Navarro, Meza, & Arbona, 2012). Conversely, other participants were disappointed that they had few options to develop peer relationships with Latin American peers. Both Sofia and Urracá asserted that with few Latin American peers, they felt isolated and disconnected from their ethnic communities, which as Lopez (2005) indicates, enhances stressors found in predominantly white locations.

Racism is endemic and pervasive throughout the education system (Kiyama et al., 2016; Taylor & Fernandez-Bergersen, 2015). Intersectional analysis of participants’ experiences in predominantly white educational contexts attests that participants have been channelled and sorted (Núñez, 2014a). Participants concluded that educators privilege white students while Latin American students are marginalized, which impacted Latin American students academically. Institutional segregation and isolation of Latin American students also served to marginalize participants. Despite these racialization challenges, participants negotiated their identities and their relationships; participants educationally persisted (Taylor & Fernandez-Bergersen, 2015). This context frames the next discussion, of the challenges participants and their families experienced in their efforts to understand the education system.

## 5.4 Negotiating Education Transitions: “Understanding the system was a challenge” (Liliana).

I remember saying, “I’m going to take sciences because I know I want to be a doctor.” .... In my head I was like, “Health Sciences. It’s totally related to medical school.” Well it isn’t! Health science is a lot of holistic health and overall health. If I wanted to go to medical school, I should have gone into Medical Sciences. Like, I figured that out, two years into my health sciences degree! (Liliana)

Like Liliana, most participants struggled to understand the education system and the relevant pathways to their education and career goals (González et al., 2003).

Furthermore, participants maintained that the necessary institutional knowledge—knowledge that would enable them to understand and subsequently navigate the education system—comes from a privileged position (Alemán, 2018). Participants’ limited or ineffectual knowledge about organizational processes created barriers for their post-secondary education persistence. Hence, their struggles to understand the education system—and particularly the transitions between high school and post-secondary education—represented their institutional marginalization as Latin Americans (Ceja, 2006; Myers, Riveros, & Duggal, 2018; Zalaquett, 2005).

Participants received limited support from education representatives about educational transitions. Liliana was one of several participants who was dissatisfied with the quality of support from her high school counsellors. Consider that like Liliana, Mayra and Valentina sought medical careers but entered university in pre-requisite courses that were non-applicable to medicine, and like Liliana, switched their programs of study mid-degree. Liliana blamed counsellors’ low expectations:

[Counsellors] would see that you didn’t speak English. But instead of saying, “I see that you’re smart, I see that you’re capable. You’re going to do this.” They would be like, “Oh, you don’t speak English? Take music. Take applied classes.” And I’m like, “But if I want to go to university, that’s not going to work.”

Liliana argued that counsellors attributed poor English skills to low academic ability, and thus did not encourage English Language Learners' pursuit of university-preparation courses. In effect, the guidance Liliana received would have tracked her away from university destination pathways. Perhaps participants' post-secondary progress despite the limited support from school counsellors, is a testament to their educational persistence (Kiyama et al., 2016).

Moreover, Benita attested that since few Latin American students attend post-secondary education, Latin American students need *more* guidance and encouragement at their schools (Gloria & Castellanos, 2012; Riegle-Crumb, 2010). Riegle-Crumb (2010) for example, found that "social capital in the form of interactions with high school counselors is a significant predictor of matriculation unique to Hispanic students" (p. 590). Conversely, participants experienced "channeling and sorting" (Núñez, 2014a, p. 50)—guiding students away from academic pursuits, which they perceived as actions not taken, due to students' racial and ethnic identities. The systemic neglect from limited support for their post-secondary and career aspirations may have had significant long-term ramifications for participants.

Mayra reflected, "I didn't consult my parents, because they wouldn't really understand." Most of the participants did not seek post-secondary and career guidance from their parents. Similar to parents in other studies with female Latin American post-secondary students (see Cejas, 2006; Gloria & Castellanos, 2012; Kimura-Walsh et al., 2009; Zalaquett, 2005), most of the parents of study participants encouraged their daughters to complete post-secondary education, despite several parents having limited institutional knowledge themselves (Carranza et al., 2009; Cejas, 2006; McWhirter et al., 2013). Parental lack of knowledge about Canada's post-secondary education system created educational challenges (McWhirter et al., 2013; Zalaquett, 2005) for daughters including Luisa, Mayra, Rosa, and Urracá. When parents are unfamiliar with the education system due to social class locations, or have language barriers, they struggle to support their daughters' post-secondary education choices and pathways (Hernández, 2015). Furthermore, poor English skills created language barriers for parents' involvement (Ceja, 2006), which affected the parents of Elena, Nicole, and Rosa. Thus, as participants

such as Urracá and Luisa recounted, Latin American parents had limited cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) to navigate the education system.

Since participants' parents struggled to navigate the system (McWhirter et al., 2013; Myers et al., 2018), generally, participants could not rely upon their parents for information about PSE. Several participants including Benita and Liliana suggested that their parents needed specific institutional support to understand their daughters' options and pathways to post-secondary and career goals. Liliana posited, "a big barrier is in terms of how the educational system works. It needs to invest in parents knowing how the system works. Because [parents] are as lost or more than we are." Liliana arrived in Canada as a youth and was able to compare her parents' educational involvement between Colombia and Canada; she recognized that the system needed to change to accommodate parents (Gloria & Castellanos, 2012). Participants concluded that the education system was perhaps most challenging for immigrant families.

Interestingly, Luisa's parents leveraged their social capital (Bourdieu, 1986) to overcome the challenges presented by their limited knowledge about Canadian post-secondary education. She explained, "my parents couldn't really offer me information or guidance with this educational system." Instead, Luisa's parents engaged family friends who had PSE system knowledge and experience, to provide Luisa and her siblings with insight and advice. Luisa realized, "I became familiar with what [going to] university involved. I knew that they were good role models. Had I not had that, then maybe I wouldn't have been so sure about university." Luisa appreciated the valuable insight her parents arranged for her to access. Without their own institutional knowledge, Luisa's parents relied on the knowledge of others to assist Luisa and her siblings with education system navigation, thus recognizing and overcoming some systemic barriers to their children's education.

Not all parents were unable to offer educational insights to their daughters. Several participants such as Liliana, Stella, and Valentina had parents who were educated professionals with middle-class social locations, and who provided their children with educational support and guidance. Conversely, parents' lack of knowledge about post-

secondary education was not restricted to parents with low socioeconomic situations (O'Connor, 2009), which suggests that there are many factors that may have inhibited parents' system knowledge. Furthermore, as evidenced by research (Cejas, 2006; Hernández, 2015 for example), when parents have limited understanding of the transitions to post-secondary education, they may rely on their daughters' judgement and self-determination, which would leave students as the decision-makers.

When they were unable to rely on parents or high school counsellors for guidance that acknowledged their abilities and considered their aspirations, participants made self-determined education and career decisions (Alvarez, 2010; Ceja, 2006; Zalaquett, 2005). Mayra explained, "I picked all the sciences courses that I needed, and decided which ones I wanted to do, so that I could get into university programs." While Mayra chose carefully, she realized later that she had needed more assistance, which is consistent with findings from Zalaquett's (2005) study of young adult Latin Americans, who made decisions with limited support. While Luisa had more support, she still resolved her university and program options herself. Luisa recalled:

That was a lot of self-research that I did. But the, "I'm going to university" idea came from family friends, and my family. And then I had to ask questions, try to figure out what I could. But not from my parents, because my parents didn't really know a lot.

Additionally, Luisa came to realize that post-secondary education and career planning should begin at a younger age than she had started planning, which Arianna, Liliana, and Valentina—with cultural capital from middle-class social locations—were aware of earlier than Luisa. Nevertheless, participants including Luisa and Mayra negotiated the system within the limits of the information, support, and guidance they were able to access.

Intersectional analysis reveals institutional barriers to educational and career decision-making. High school counsellors offered limited support for post-secondary education decisions, and parents had limited knowledge of the system (Cejas, 2006; McWhirter et al., 2013). Educators and counsellors often held low expectations of participants and their

parents, which participants attributed to educators' perceptions of participants' intersections of racial, ethnic, and gender identities (Kiyama et al., 2016). Therefore, some participants navigated the education system with little or no guidance. As such, through institutional neglect (González et al., 2003; Malagon & Alvarez, 2010) participants made educational and career decisions with limited support, guidance, and systemic knowledge.

## 5.5 Summary

Participants' negotiations of systemic challenges were analyzed with an intersectional lens, negotiations that included affording their post-secondary education, enduring institutionalized racism, and navigating transitions to PSE. Núñez (2014a) maintains that intersectional analysis of institutional contexts and identities facilitates understanding of Latin American student's educational progress. As such, this chapter relied on analysis according to the intersectional Domains of Power to analyze participants' negotiation of their education institutions and systems, and their social relationships with educators and peers. Without such analyses, the role of Organizational, Intersubjective, Representative, and Experiential relationships with participants' education would be obfuscated.

Participants identified issues with privilege that they attributed to classism and racism. They argued that privileged students have an easier and better time at school and receive more (positive and supportive) attention from educators and are more likely to be more successful academically than Latin American students. Additionally, participants concluded that most privileged students and educators are white, and white students are more successful than students of colour. Conversely, Latin American students are not white, are racialized and marginalized at school, and thus experience challenges to their academic efforts. Participants identified specific barriers that privileged some students and not others, barriers which channeled and sorted participants and included institutional marginalization through economic and racial barriers. Participants found themselves marginalized in many facets of the education system. The next chapter examines participants' persistence, which is evidenced by their attitudes and expectations about the value of education, their motivation to educationally succeed, and their actions of persistence in response to challenges, such as those discussed in this chapter.



## Chapter 6: Educational Persistence: Belief in the Promise of Education

Being part of an immigrant family has influenced me, in the sense to strive, or to work harder towards my education. It has made education, not, this thing you get. It's like, [parents] put education on a pedestal. It's not just like, *I go to school, get done school, get a job*. I feel like coming from an immigrant family my parents see education on this pedestal. "If my kids could reach that, it's an accomplishment." So, it's not just, easy. It's something that has more content to it. To them, it means a brighter future. To them it means, "She's going to have a better life than I did." So, education's not just education for me. We see it more as like [something] you strive to reach for. (Elena)

For Elena and her parents, education offers a cherished opportunity to realize a better life, with accomplishments that benefit the whole family. They believe in the promise of education (Ovink, 2016). That belief in turn animates participants' educational persistence. The promise of education is generally understood (see Ovink, 2016; Stromquist, 2006; Yinger, 2005, for example) as a guarantee that education provides "economic and social betterment" and "equality among diverse social groups" (Stromquist, 2006, p. 145).

### 6.1 Introduction

The previous two chapters documented some of the challenges and barriers that participants negotiated in their pursuit of education, challenges and barriers that might deter even the most persistent students. Nonetheless, participants persisted. During their interviews, participants identified many strategies and factors that enabled them to persist. The strengths-oriented discussion in Chapter 6 focuses on education expectations and motivational factors. High expectations about educational achievement came from parents, who influenced their daughters' academic persistence and educational expectations, expressed as goal setting and reliance on education to support the quest to reach their goals. Participants also relied on several motivational factors to encourage their persistence, including financial and academic factors, and factors associated with

*recompensa* (reward or acknowledgement) for parents' sacrifices and hardships. Finally, examples of participants' persistence as they "pushed through" the "hard work" of academic achievement illustrate participants' educational persistence and demonstrate their commitment to their belief in the promise of education. Note that since this is an intracategorical analysis that engaged the Experiential Domain of Power, some participants' discussions are in the foreground (Shields, 2008) to illustrate some experiences in depth and the differences in experiences between participants, rather than prioritizing only the similarity of their experiences.

## 6.2 Education Expectations: Reliance on Education

Elena's quote that opens this chapter articulates expectations about education, that education promises opportunities to create "a better life", and results in a "brighter future" not just for her, but for her whole family (Gonzales, 2012, p. 131). Other participants expressed similar convictions in the promise of education. For example, Benita and Urracá identified education as a long-term investment that provides opportunities to achieve educational and career goals. As this discussion here illustrates, parents' expectations for their daughters' academic performance is established through parents' involvement, support, and encouragement of their daughters. Additionally, participants' own expectations about their educational opportunities reveal the paths that participants travelled to reach their potential.

### 6.2.1 Parents' education expectations: "Education on a pedestal." (Elena)

Participants confirmed that their parents highly valued their daughters' education, albeit in various ways. For example, Isabel recalled with fondness that her mother practiced educational games with her when she was a youngster. Parents offered encouragement (Isabel, Liliana, Mayra, Nicole, Samara, and Stella), were supportive (Elena, Isabel, Liliana, Mayra; Samara), monitored and oversaw study time and homework (Arianna and Samara), and some simply assumed that their daughters would achieve academically (Luisa, Mayra, and Valentina). Regardless of the methods parents engaged, they impressed upon participants that parents valued their daughters' education. Although

participants including Mayra and Sofia kept their parents unaware of their post secondary education (PSE) challenges, Samara and Stella were among the participants who maintained regular communication with their parents about their schooling. Parents may not have been able to assist with system navigation, but they were able to offer support (Cejas, 2006; McWhirter et al., 2013), such as when Arianna and Stella made late-night distress calls to their mothers. Furthermore, Stella recalled how she and her parents made educational decisions together, while Arianna even suggested that her parents cared more about their children's education than Canadian parents cared. These findings are consistent with research findings that demonstrate how Latin American parents value their children's education. For example, from her study of "successful Latina scholars" Gonzales (2012) argues that parents, "were deeply invested in and committed to their children's educational futures. Despite the lack of familiarity of some parents with the school system, education was definitely an expectation" (p. 132). For the parents of this study's participants, "education was definitely an expectation."

Research establishes the importance of Latin American parents' influence on academic progress. When immigrant parents value education and have high expectations of their children's academic outcomes (Feliciano & Lanuza, 2015), their children are more likely to engage in education and achieve academic success (see for example Carranza et al., 2009; Ceja, 2006; Feliciano & Lanuza, 2015; Gerritsen & van Zenderen, 2012; Henry et al., 2008; McWhirter et al., 2013; Plunket, Behnke, Sands, & Choi, 2009; Zalaquett, 2005). Additionally, research that focused on the educational experiences of female Latin American students found that parental encouragement and support were crucial factors in students' academic persistence (Rivera & Gallimore, 2006; Sapp et al., 2016, for example). Families were also a "strong source" of motivation for students in a study that compared "high achieving and non-high achieving Latinas" and their access to information about PSE (Kimura-Walsh et al., 2009, p. 305). Furthermore, research that examined educational barriers and supports found that family support was characterized as, "high expectations" for daughters' academic achievement (McWhirter et al., 2013). While in their study of Mexican-American adolescents' academic achievement, Carranza et al. (2009) determined that female students, "who perceived that their parents expected them to get good grades, study hard, and complete their homework, reported higher

achievement and aspirations” (p. 326). Similarly, a study of older immigrant graduate students found that their own high educational expectations were linked with their parents’ high expectations (Feliciano & Lanuza, 2015). Evidently, findings from this study are consistent with research that demonstrated, when Latin American parents value education and expect their children to achieve academically, students respond accordingly.

Importantly, participants in this study demonstrated that they were highly motivated to persist academically regardless of their social class locations. Parents’ expectations that their children would succeed academically, positively influenced their children’s academic persistence and educational accomplishments. This support is impactful, despite family economic precarity (see for example Feliciano & Lanuza 2015; Feliciano & Rumbault, 2005; Gerritsen & van Zenderen, 2012; Kao & Tienda, 1995). Furthermore, immigrant families have high expectations about education even when they experience economic disadvantages (Kao & Tienda, 1995). As Perreira, Fuligni, and Potochnick (2010) argue, immigrant students “expect to overcome, not fall victim to, their relatively low socioeconomic status” (p. 150). Immigrant optimism refers to the importance that immigrant parents place on education. For example, when they examined the school satisfaction of immigrant youth in the Netherlands, Gerritsen and van Zenderen (2012) uncovered the pervasiveness of immigrant optimism within the diverse immigrant participants.

Whereas several participants in this study associated their educational achievement with parental involvement, it is important to recognize that not all participants’ parents were similarly involved. Some parents appeared to under-value education, including Urracá’s father, who admonished her to work instead of seeking educational opportunities, and Benita’s father who expected her to be a stay-at-home mother. Moreover, the parents of Rosa, Sofia, and Urracá among others were unable to engage with their daughters’ schoolwork in part because of language barriers. Nevertheless, some parents supported and encouraged their daughters’ academic progress despite such barriers. For example, Sofia’s mother arranged for Sofia to attend free after-school homework-help programs to ensure that Sofia had access to educational supports that she herself could not provide.

Interestingly, later in our interview Sofia regretted that, unlike her peers, “it was just me. I didn’t really have someone who’s always on my butt, like, ‘Do your homework.’” Although Sofia realized that her parents approached her schooling differently when compared to her peers, her mother’s support changed over time. Some participants verified that they had little to no parental pressure to progress academically, which suggests that their academic persistence was responsive to internalized motivations and less reliant on external motivations.

Significantly, unlike Lilianna, Stella, and Nicole, the participants who experienced limited parent educational involvement had families that experienced poverty; participants such as Benita, Sofia, Rosa, Urracá spoke little of their parents’ support, monitoring, or expectations of PSE participation. Furthermore, participants’ parents had not experienced PSE themselves. However, not all the families that experienced poverty were uninvolved with their daughters’ education. Luisa, Mayra, and Samara confirmed that their parents were engaged in their education, illustrating that parents’ educational involvement may not be restricted to those with middle-class positions, or with cultural capital from previous higher education experiences. For example, the parents of Mayra, Nicole, and Victoria had high expectations of their daughters, yet varying levels of educational achievement themselves. Importantly, even when parents were unable to assist with homework, they “demonstrate high expectations of their children” (Carranza et al., 2009, p. 326). Research that studied parental expectations in contexts at the intersections of class and gender had similar findings. A study of the “female educational advantage,” which refers to female students out-performing male students, found this advantage more prevalent in immigrant families who had experienced poverty (Feliciano, 2012). However, without challenging the concept of female educational advantage, Feliciano (2012) examined contributing factors of the female gender advantage, and she identified gender differences in familial influences on the academic achievement of children of immigrants. Evidently, findings from this study are consistent with research that identifies a variety of factors that impact parents’ influence on academic performance.

Research reveals another area of variability in the effect of parents' educational expectations, the influence of parents' gender. For example, Plunket, Behnke, Sands, & Choi (2009) argue, "perceived schoolwork help by mothers was positively and significantly related to adolescents' academic engagement" (p. 266), while the "effect of fathers' monitoring on their academic engagement were less strong for girls and immigrants from Latin America" (p. 266). Similarly, from their survey of academic achievement factors of Latin American youth, Henry, Merten, Plunkett, and Sands (2008), found that "adolescents who perceive their mothers as holding high academic aspirations have higher GPAs" (p. 587), while fathers' educational aspirations did not have the same correlation. Mothers' support also held a significant and positive relation with their daughters' academic motivation (Alfaro et al., 2006). However, contrary to such research, several study participants highlighted their fathers' influence on their education, with little attention to their mothers' influence. Nicole for example declared, "my accomplishments are dad's accomplishments, because I'm a part of him." Stella recalled her father's support and involvement in her educational decisions, such as the choice they made between two high school programs. While some participants identified both parents' educational influences, Mayra, Nicole, and Stella are among the participants who provided more detailed references to their fathers' educational involvement. From participants' discussions, there appeared to be no generalizations between fathers' class and education, or between participants' mothers and fathers.

Participants' parents demonstrated the importance of their daughters' education with a variety of approaches, including offering support, monitoring their education, and expecting academic achievement. This study supports research findings that illustrate the value of parents' involvement in their daughters' education. Alternatively, some participants persisted academically despite limited parental educational understanding or involvement, which suggests that this is a space for future research. Regardless of parents' expectations, participants had educational expectations of their own, and these expectations are discussed next.

### 6.2.2 Participants' education expectations: "Everything will work out." (Samara)

[I'm] goal orientated. Very positive, but realistic. You have to set your goals. I'm very organized in terms of how I'm going to get to that goal. I write things down all the time, or journal. I'm very hopeful, that everything will work out. (Samara)

Multiple factors influenced their persistence, even when participants had limited parental knowledge of or involvement in their education. Some participants such as Samara expected to reap the rewards offered by education, and their educational and career goal setting illustrated their reliance on education to fulfil the promise, "that everything will work out." Several participants specifically framed their educational expectations in the form of goal setting. Nicole, who sought to become a teacher, recounted:

At the age of 4, I knew my mom went to [University], so I always told people, "I'm going to go to [University]! Just like my mother!" And I did. And then I said, "I want to be a teacher! I'm getting into Teachers' College!" And I did. I'm pleased and I'm proud about that.

Later in our interview, Nicole recalled further details of her efforts to achieve her long-term goal of becoming a teacher, which included securing volunteer and work positions that were relevant to teaching, thus demonstrating her long-term persistence and commitment to her goals.

Participants' educational preparation activities provide insight into their educational expectations. For example, Luisa confirmed:

Those [university program choices] are big decisions. Especially if you're investing money, time, energy, like, years of your life. It should be well thought [through] .... But a lot of that was research. The program that I chose, that was a lot of self-research, that *I* did.

Clearly, Luisa committed to the effort required to make informed education decisions. Sofia too advocated, "you *have* to do the research. You *have* to talk to people. And that's one of the biggest things. You need to network and talk to people. And you need to really

*learn* about things.” For Luisa and Sofia, well-informed goals and decisions were crucial to their PSE education.

Research supports the finding that participants’ educational goal setting positively influenced academic outcomes. Setting career goals was one important factor that influenced degree completion by Latin American students (Ovink, 2016, p. 122). Educational goal setting also provides significant predictors for resilience (Morgan Consoli, Delicio, Noriega, & Llamas, 2015) and career attainment (Feliciano & Rumbaut, 2005). Furthermore, research with female post-secondary students of colour found them “focused both intensely and intently on specific post-college professional goals, and on how what they were doing academically would facilitate the realization of those goals” (Morales, 2008, p. 205). Social class mobility was also an important goal for participants in research with female Latin American students (Bettie, 2014; Morales, 2008; Ovink, 2016).

However, goal setting itself does not guarantee successful goal outcomes (Ovink, 2016), since goals are contextual. Consider that major life challenges provoked several participants to modify their education and career goals. For example, after her son was born, Luisa reassessed her plans and then revised her program of study to one that would lead to concrete career benefits. Specifically, Luisa ensured that her studies included French, which gave her the option of becoming a French teacher, a high-demand career that would provide her with the ability to support and care for her son. Mayra too reset her educational and career goals. She explained:

I *want* to be successful. I want to live a life that makes me happy. And I know that’s not medical school. That’s what makes me successful. I always look at the bigger picture, and it’s not wrong to look at the bigger picture and think forward.

After her disappointment from failing a first-year course, Mayra reassessed her goals, and then switched her career plans from medicine to teaching. She realized that her aspirations for success were still achievable. Life challenges enhanced the determination of participants such as Luisa and Mayra to rely on their education to reach their goals. Consistent with research (Bordes-Edgar et al., 2011; Morales, 2008; Plunket, Behnke,



Sands, & Choi, 2009), goal setting establishes the expectation that goals are achievable. For example, Plunket, et al. (2009) argue, “adolescents from immigrant families who stay more focused on academics also report better grades” (p. 263). Thus, participants’ goal fulfilment relies on education to provide opportunities for life improvement.

Evidently, participants’ parents valued education and had considerable expectations for their daughters’ education. Additionally, participants held their own high expectations and goals to focus on and to strive for. Participants’ goal setting demonstrated that they valued, believed in, and relied on education, that they expected education to live up to its promise to provide opportunities for the fulfillment of their goals. Consequently, participants’ goal setting fulfills an important factor of persistence (Bordes-Edgar et al., 2011). Yet, educational persistence requires more than educational expectations and goal setting. Therefore, participants’ educational motivation factors are reviewed next.

## 6.3 Educational Persistence: Motivation

For several participants, life events motivated academic resilience and persistence, events such as Luisa’s long illness and Sofia’s experiences with poverty. While participants discussed a variety of factors that motivated them to persist educationally, three factors dominated their conversations about their motivation. Included here are discussion of participants’ economic motivators for financial stability, social class mobility, and care for parents; next, elements of academic achievement and failure, and their impact on participants’ motivation; finally, the motivational effect of parents’ experiences. Note that each of the participants were influenced by at least one and likely more than one of these motivators.

### 6.3.1 Financial motivators.

Several participants acknowledged the financial motivators that inspired their educational persistence; educational attainment would be a mechanism for financial stability, while some participants who had experienced familial poverty expected that education would provide opportunities for class mobility (Bettie, 2014; Cammarota, 2004; Ovink, 2016). Benita for example confirmed that her education was worth the expense and the debt incurred, since she expected her Ph.D. to help her to secure a career that would guarantee

financial security and in turn, class mobility. Concerns about future experiences with poverty were expressed by Luisa and Sofia. For instance, Sofia's shame of her family's "little chicken coop house", and her contempt for her mother's financial dependence illustrated some of Sofia's attitudes about poverty. Sofia expected that her education would yield class mobility and result in a middle-class lifestyle that encompassed her career, home, and family. Sofia mused:

It's kind of cheesy but, one of my favourite things to do is to look at houses. And cars. And even if it's not something I'll ever have, it gives me an idea of, "That is something I'd like to have." And I know it sounds very materialistic.

Sofia identified the material, external representations of middle class that motivated her education goals. However, later in our conversation Sofia asserted that she sought to establish herself financially before starting a family, so that her children would not have to experience the challenges of living with poverty like she had. Sofia acknowledged that her nuanced experiences with poverty went beyond material hardship.

Alternatively, Luisa already had a family during her PSE, and she sought to retain her economic stability. Luisa explained:

I don't want to be worried about not having food in my fridge, or not having options to do things. I don't want money to be a limit for me to do things that I'm passionate about or make me happy.... I don't want to be struggling.... [I want to be] on my way to having a good income where I can move out of my house. And I don't care if it's small. I want a nice home. But if it's small and nice, and [to] be able to get groceries, be able to [meet] our needs. That would give me a lot of comfort.

Luisa envisioned the independent (Ovink, 2016) middle-class position that her education would provide her, with financial stability and financial freedoms. These findings are consistent with earlier research about Latin American adolescents' assimilation and academic achievement during high school, whereby female students significantly valued the economic benefits of education (Bettie, 2014; Colón & Sánchez, 2010; Ovink, 2016),

benefits that influenced class mobility. Colón and Sánchez (2010) for example, found connections between the economic value of education and academic achievement, and they argue, “the more students viewed education as a means for social mobility, the better they performed in school” (p. 268). Yet Luisa’s persistence was motivated by more than class mobility; she sought independence.

Financial gains and class mobility were not the only financial motivators participants discussed. Nicole for example, worried about caring for her parents in their senior years. She rationalized:

Because I’m the only child, I know that I’m the only one that my parents have. And they’re older, they had me late. So, I think the thing for me is to get a job quickly, and get money quickly, just in case something happens to them. My dad, Alzheimer’s runs in the family. I’m worried about him.... And especially because he doesn’t have his family around him. I’m the only one.

Nicole’s lifelong aspirations to become a teacher evolved to include a career that would enable her to attend to her parents’ potential economic precarity. As McWhirter, Valdez, and Caban (2013) argue:

Many [participants] were sharply aware of the scarcity of family resources, and expressed a strong sense of responsibility and desire to help their families; the rewards of graduating and going to [post-secondary education] were often cast in terms of the family rather than the individual (p. 45).

Nicole clearly conveyed a “strong sense of responsibility” for her parents’ care, which was one motivation for her to reach her academic and career goals.

Interestingly, while Nicole was motivated to ensure her parents managed potential health challenges, Arianna sought to assist her parents to maintain their particular social class position into retirement. She reflected, “one day, I want to buy my dad a car. And have them retire and have a nice house but at the beach, because they like the beach.”

Arianna’s motivation to persist academically included her ability to contribute to her parents’ future lifestyle. Therefore, while Arianna’s and Nicole’s educational motivations

included supporting their parents financially, the details of their economic motivations were very different. Evidently, past, present, and future economic and class factors influenced participants' motivation to achieve their academic goals. Whether it was the potential class mobility that PSE offered, or the future earnings to support parents, all influenced participants' motivation to succeed academically. Academic achievement and failure also motivated participants to persist academically and are discussed next.

### 6.3.2 Academic motivators.

Several participants professed their love of learning, which encouraged their academic processes and influenced participants' motivations. Liliana for example exclaimed, "I like learning, in general. I'm a learner. I'm a life [long] learner, I would say, I like learning." Benita echoed Liliana, saying, "I loved school. I learned English in 6 months. I loved school. Like, even back home, I always loved school." Several participants acknowledged the importance of learning enjoyment to their academic motivation. Urracá for example, recognized her "zest" for learning that motivated her to explore issues of interest, which included her Panamanian heritage, feminism, and racialized relationships. Rosa recalled that her love of learning helped her to acclimate back into her studies when she returned to university as a mature student. She reflected, "I always loved to study, so this is why later on I was able to start again, and then continue [on]." Rosa's accomplishments progressed from informal studies to her Bachelors, Masters, and then Ph.D. degrees. Intrinsic enjoyment of learning provided a strong motivator for participants, which supports research findings that indicate learning enjoyment is a factor for academic persistence. For example, one study of adolescent students in the Netherlands found that immigrant girls generally enjoyed their schooling, and generally do well academically (Gerritsen & van Zenderen, 2012). Research about Latin American adolescents also recognized that learning enjoyment was associated with higher grades (Boutakidis, Rodríguez, Knutson Miller, & Barnett, 2014; Kaplan et al., 2007).

Educational attainment, particularly in the form of grades, was another powerful motivational factor of participants' educational persistence. For example, Arianna exposed the stress of maintaining her high grades when she exclaimed, "I freak out if I

get a bad grade!” while Benita agreed, “I always liked to get the marks.” Consider Urracá’s motivation by her course grades. She reflected:

For the past 3 years, my GPA has been A and above. I haven’t gotten anything below A. I think a lot of it is because it drives me to do well. Try to be the best that I can be.

While Urracá identified her motivation to maintain high grades, she acknowledged the influence of lower grades to increase her motivation. She exclaimed:

I got a B+ and I’m like, “The next one, I need to have an A+”, in order to balance out the grade to an A. And I was devastated. I cried! And I asked the Prof if I could hand in something additional, in order to boost the grade. He was like, “Sure, if you want to take this back and rewrite it, taking my feedback into account, I’ll regrade it.” And he did. I got an A, so I didn’t have to stress out over the next one.

Urracá’s voice betrayed her panicked reaction to a mark below her expectations, a mark that would likely satisfy other students. For Urracá and other participants too, maintaining academic achievement levels was a significant motivator for educational persistence.

Several participants experienced failure, which motivated them academically (Ovink, 2016). For example, Elena, Mayra, and Valentina each failed a course, while other participants had struggled on the edge of failing. Consider Elena’s experiences with chemistry. She reflected:

If any course has given me a headache, it’s been chemistry. That one, I just couldn’t do at all, I couldn’t. And that’s when I knew, food and nutrition was not for me. I did not like chemistry at all. That was one of those courses, “I don’t like this, it doesn’t feel right”. I ended up passing after the second try. It’s one of those where you feel really bad. That’s probably one of the worse things I’ve felt here in university. I felt. I felt dumb. I was, for failure, I felt like I was just, “Okay.

Well this sucked.” It’s horrible.... So, I was like, “Well, you have to get back up. And try again.” And I did. I passed the next one. I was very happy.

Although she was motivated to reach a successful outcome, the process challenged Elena’s belief in herself. Several other participants including Valentina lost confidence in themselves when they experienced failure, and struggled to retain their motivation, while failure prompted some participants to reassess their career goals and subsequently switch university programs mid-degree.

Isabel and Valentina were among the participants who were motivated to succeed because failure was “never an option” for them; their parents would not have accepted failure. For example, Valentina mused, “I never really think that, *not* being successful, is an option.” Similarly, Luisa said of dropping out, “it’s not really an option for me to consider,” and found dropping out, “foolish”. While Isabel declared, “there’s no way I would fail a class. Like, that was the end of the world, which was good!” Evidently, Isabel appreciated the catalyst for achievement that the unacceptability of failure presented. Perhaps the context of, “failure is not an option” influenced Mayra’s reactions to failure. Although she was motivated to address the academic consequences, Mayra repeated her failed course, yet the relational consequences remained; Mayra lied to her parents about her results. She reflected:

In First Year, I actually failed chemistry, and I didn’t do well enough in biology. I had to retake chemistry again in second year. So, that was a challenge. And, I actually didn’t even tell my parents. I was like, “I have to do all these courses again.”

Deeply disappointed by her results in those two courses, Mayra expressed guilt about continuing to lie to her parents about the results, even five years later. Mayra conceded:

I still haven’t told them. And I thought about whether I should let them know. “By the way, I did fail, but I still made it on time.” At least for myself, I know I made it.

While Mayra's failure motivated her to rectify her academic results, the intangible consequences of her failure were harder to resolve.

Even the *spectre* of failure inspired some participants' motivation and persistence. Nicole and Benita were motivated to persist academically when other people anticipated their failure. Nicole reflected:

I think the fact that I just made it on my own. Everyone says that only children are spoiled, and can't do anything. Parents hover around. That's usually what I hear. And I was nervous coming so far away, because I had to do everything on my own.... And then here it was, everything was on me.

Frustrated by others' perceptions that she would fail without her parents' support nearby, Nicole was motivated to challenge such assumptions and succeed.

Similarly, Benita demonstrated that others' expectations of her failure motivated her to persist. She explained:

I always try to prove people that are wrong, wrong. And it seems to work, because, you know what? It's the whole idea when someone says you can't do something.... And it's always the proving wrong. And I think it was always the idea [that] everybody thought less of me. And everybody thought that I wasn't going to amount to anything. That's been like, "No! I'm going to prove you wrong!"

Motivated to prove others wrong, Benita was determined to reach her academic goals that proceeded from the attainment of her college diploma and continued through her B.A., Masters, and then Ph.D. Benita's achievement as a form of resistance to such expectations (Cammarota, 2004) are similar to research findings about female Latin American students who were motivated to persist academically in order to resist oppressive expectations about their (in)abilities (Malagon & Alvarez, 2010).

Failure evoked strong declarations of persistence, and participants' responses included, "Get back up." (Elena), "We're going to get through it." (Elvia), and "Get right back." (Samara). Elena expanded:

I'm that type of person where, if I fall down, I'll find a way to get back up. It might not be the way I want to, but I'll do my best to get up. And that's what I've learned the last year. That sometimes it doesn't go perfectly.

Several participants even appreciated the motivational aspect of failure. Isabel saw failure as a challenge; she acknowledged her fear of failure and admitted that failure provided her with opportunities for improvement. Isabel's response to failure contrasts with Benita's. Benita seemed prepared to fight for educational survival, while Isabel seemed to take educational challenges in stride. Consider their contextual locations. While Benita has had to be self-reliant and persist despite others who challenged her abilities, Isabel has a supportive, middle-class family that assumes she will be successful. There are nuanced class differences in their academic motivations.

Samara was motivated by failure to improve her grades and prevent failure from happening again. Even several years afterwards, Samara recalled the impact of her failed midterm. "I got a 32 percent. So, that was a *big* shock for me. And I worked my butt off for the final, and I ended up passing it." However, even though she shares Mayra's persistence after experiencing failure, similar to Isabel, Samara did not feel Mayra's shame. She explained, "I'm confident that, even if you do fail, you can get right back, and work your way around things." Samara and other participants were motivated to work hard to prevent failure and its potential consequences, although their social locations may have influenced how they responded to issues of failure.

While participants' grades signalled their achievements, failure produced complex consequences beyond the loss of marks. Some participants were motivated to retain their level of achievement or to avoid failure, while others persisted despite experiencing failure. Although generalizations about this group of participants and their academic motivators are elusive, there are class nuances evident in their similarities and



differences, which would benefit from further research. Throughout, many participants' parents significantly influenced participants' achievement-related motivation.

### 6.3.3 Parents as motivators: *Recompensa*.

I look at my father, everything that he's gone through. I think to myself, "Well if he can do it, then I can do it." .... My strategy is, just always think about him.  
(Nicole)

For participants including Nicole, parents influenced their motivation to persist academically. Several participants for example sought parental approval for their academic endeavours. As Isabel declared, "It was just, making my parents proud of me," and Arianna explained her motivation as, "wanting to be successful. It's not always just about me. It's about wanting my parents to be proud." While Samara saw her parents' pride for her elder sister, and she wanted that pride too. She recounted:

My middle sister is super smart. Brilliant. I think that also made me kind of jealous....in grade seven I was like, "Ok. [sister] is doing really well. I have to start doing well." My parents were always pressuring us. And seeing [sister] so successful, and my parents being so proud of that, I was like, "Okay, I need to start stepping up now."

Samara acknowledged that her parents' approval inspired her academic motivation. Similarly, research findings demonstrate that Latin American, first generation post-secondary students are motivated to work hard and persist because they make their parents proud, and they honour their parents with their academic achievements (Gloria & Castellanos, 2012).

Similarly, Elena, explained that she was motivated to ensure her parents were not disappointed with her. She recalled:

I just, didn't want to disappoint them. In the sense, they've done so much. They moved countries; they wanted to give us a better life. To take their hard work for

granted would never sit well with me. So, I guess that's why I strive harder.... It's one of those things where, I just didn't want to disappoint them. So, I tried harder.

While participants such as Elena sought to prevent her parents' disappointment and some participants pursued parents' pride, other participants were motivated by the challenges their parents had experienced during immigration.

Urracá, who recognized her parents' sacrifices and her family's hardships that included poverty, explained that she was motivated:

To show that my parents' immigration wasn't in vain. All the hardships. We came from nothing! We had our luggage and that was it when we came to Canada. And we were poor! Super poor! And I guess it's to show, "Okay, it wasn't in vain" .... My sister and my brother didn't go to university. I feel like I have that extra motivation to show that all our struggle wasn't for nothing. I take on their education as well.

As the youngest of three children, Urracá is the only one of her siblings to attend post-secondary education. Although several reasons motivated Urracá to academically persist, one significant motivation is to ensure that her parents' efforts to establish a better life for the family had meaningful and valuable results, particularly since her academic progress represented her siblings too. Notably, Urracá did not refer to social class mobility as motivation for her educational persistence, contrary to participants in this and other studies (e.g. Bettie, 2014; Ovink, 2016) who identified class mobility as a motivational factor of their persistence.

Samara identified how respect for family translated into motivation to be academically successful (Perreira, et al., 2010). She recounted:

Our parents have worked *so* hard for it. We almost owe it to them to show them that their hard work hasn't been a waste of time. That it was worth it.... Being successful was a big thing for me, just to show my parents that their hard work was worth it.

Samara wanted her parents to realize that their hardships and efforts were valued by her, and those efforts produced the desired results. As Samara exclaimed, “they came here for us, so we have to learn how to be successful.” Thus, it was her responsibility to be successful for them.

Participants translated obligation to family into academic motivation (Perreira, et al., 2010; Sánchez, et al., 2010). Elvia’s sense of obligation to her family acknowledged her parents’ sacrifices to provide educational opportunities. She explained:

Honestly, it’s knowing that my parents sacrificed. Like, it sounds clichéd I guess. But it’s really my parents. And, seeing all the things they’ve had to go through to get me this opportunity. I feel like, they did their part in getting me here, and giving me this opportunity. And, it’s up to me to be successful. And, to keep up all the hard work.

Elvia was moved by her parents’ sacrifices for her opportunities, which motivated her to work hard. As Perreira et al. (2010) argue, “Latino students with a strong sense of obligation to the family see trying hard and doing well in school as one of their duties as members of their family” (p. 134). Elvia explained later, “I think it’s the pressure of, I feel like I’m carrying my family’s sacrifices. Or my family’s struggles. I feel like, that’s really what’s pushing me.” The sacrifices motivated Elvia and she internalized them. She explained, “I feel like it’s my responsibility, to be strong for them. And to be successful for them.” The result of Elvia’s efforts would be the easing of her parents’ hardships, because of her successes.

However, when Elena sought to help me understand her educational motivation, she spoke of *recompensa*, and I learned that her motivation encompassed more than obligation. She reflected:

I just feel like their sacrifice needs to have some sort of—I know the word in Spanish, but not in English—*Recompensa*. Like a sense of, a result at the end. So, their sacrifice, that’s .... what kept me driven to finish. No matter what I start, I

knew I had to finish. So that's why I never gave up. I just kept going, and if it didn't turn out the first time, I would find a way to make it work.

For Elena, her academic persistence acknowledges her parents' sacrifices and a daughters' obligations. This interpretation of parents' motivational impact is evident in other participants' experiences. Stella explained that she internalized *recompensa*:

There's an explicit pressure to do well. But I think once you're old enough to acknowledge what it takes to immigrate, then there is kind of a self-imposed pressure that's like, "My parents did this! And it took all of this. And so, I *have* to do well."

Stella was intrinsically motivated to produce results that acknowledged and respected her parents' sacrifices. Parents' life experiences motivated participants with a form of "obligation ethos" (Feliciano & Lanuza, 2015) or what Elena referred to as *recompensa* (acknowledgement). Parents' sacrifices and hardships motivated participants to honour their parents through their academic efforts (Camarota, 2004; Sánchez et al., 2010; Venzant Chambers et al., 2015). As evidenced by participants' discussions, *recompensa* was a significant factor of their academic motivations.

The finding that parents' hardships motivated participants academically, and the concept of *recompensa* that motivated Elena and other participants, confirms research with similar findings (for example, Enriquez, 2011; Gloria & Castellanos, 2012; McWhirter et al., 2013; Sánchez et al., 2010; Zalaquett, 2005). For Latin American students, academic achievement was a signifier to honour parents (Stein et al., 2017), acknowledge family sacrifices (Venzant Chambers et al., 2015), and respect "mothers' struggles and sacrifices" (Camarota, 2004, p. 64). As Perreira et al. (2010) argue:

One of the primary ways that they can demonstrate respect for their parents and the sacrifices made by their parents is to succeed in school. Thus, family respect strongly motivates their academic endeavors along every dimension—importance, usefulness, future value, and intrinsic value of education. (p. 150)

The importance of *recompensa*, is to, “not let their family’s sacrifice go in vain.... Not out of a sense of obligation, but more out of a sense of respect for this sacrifice....to honor their parents and the many sacrifices they made” (Venzant, et al., 2015, p. 812-813). *Recompensa* was a significant motivator for participants, which engaged respect, pride, and obligation. As Stein, et al., (2017) determined, “by honoring and respecting their families in terms of school and career paths, Latino emerging adults find additional meaning in their lives and, in particular, in their educational pursuits” (p. 112). Thus, *recompensa* was about parents’ sacrifices that inspired participants about the future.

Although participant motivation could be attributed to obligation in keeping with familism, participants’ reasons for their educational persistence are significantly complex, whereby they are intrinsically motivated to recognize, reward, and acknowledge their parents’ sacrifices to improve the children’s opportunities. It is participants’ responsibility to that action that they are educationally persistent. Thus, *recompensa* is not equivalent to familism, but it could be considered one aspect of familism. Familism, which is associated with Latin American family togetherness and the prioritization of family needs (Hernández, 2015; Ovink, 2014; Sy & Romero, 2008) may motivate academic progress (Fuligni & Fuligni, 2007; Sy, 2006; Sánchez et al., 2010). Additionally, the familism values of respect for and obligation to the family are “important for Latinos across all levels of SES” (Stein et al., 2017, p. 112). While research has examined the role of parents’ influence on Latin American students’ academic persistence (for example, Alfaro et al., 2006; Plunket, Behnke, Sands, & Choi, 2009), there is no consensus about whether familism is a hindrance (Feliciano, 2012) or a benefit (Esparza & Sánchez, 2008; Stein et al., 2014) to Latin American students’ academic persistence. Regardless of its manifestation, participants’ motivation and persistence were significantly influenced by parents.

Participants’ motivational factors encouraged them to persist despite the educational challenges and barriers they experienced. Financial contexts, needs, and expectations motivated some participants. Some were motivated by academic achievement; achievement of good grades for some, while for others, experience with failure was a catalyst for academic persistence. Importantly, parents were highly influential and

motivational factors. Participants wanted to acknowledge that their parents' hard work and sacrifices inspired their daughters' academic efforts. The last section of this chapter discusses participants' persistence as they pushed through the hard work of academic accomplishment.

#### 6.4 Persistence, Despite the Challenges: "I pushed through it. It was hard." (Mayra)

It's going to be hard sometimes, but you push through it.... This is the norm, and this is just what you do.... I understand it's a struggle, and it's a fight. And it's going to be hard, but we're going to put up with it. And we're going to get through it. (Elvia)

Participants agreed with Elvia and Mayra; post-secondary education is difficult, but they persist. Participants acknowledged that they are hard working, resilient, and persistent, despite the "unique obstacles and challenges" they experience as female students of colour (Morales, 2008). Indeed, as Rosa argued, Latinas "have to work twice as hard, to be able to succeed." Arianna, Elvia, and Mayra are among the participants who expressed pride in their accomplishments and their efforts to push through and reach their goals.

Most participants defined themselves as hardworking in the context of their schooling, but they framed the concept of hardworking in diverse ways. For example, while Sofia unabashedly proclaimed, "I'm a lot more hardworking than a lot of people," Stella acknowledged, "I'm fairly diligent. And, pretty dedicated. Like, I've always been pretty academic. So, I think that's part of my persona. I'm not competitive, but I'm hard on myself, academically." Like Stella, participants including Mayra and Urracá recognized that they have high expectations of themselves to work hard and progress academically. Significantly, most participants framed their post secondary education experiences as "hard". Simultaneously, most participants engaged some form of the concept "push through" in the context of their academic resilience and persistence. When she reflected about her deliberations on whether to abandon her studies, Elena described her efforts to push through. She sighed, "Sometimes I feel like giving up, but sometimes I see that end. The end of the light at the tunnel. I'm just, 'A little bit more, just a little bit more. And

I'm done.'" Similarly, as Liliana reflected about her educational journey, she recalled, "I pushed myself to do better, and I pushed myself to graduate, and do what I wanted to do." Like Liliana, participants pushed through their academic challenges.

Moreover, when participants discussed their difficulties with post-secondary education, they also illustrated their persistence. For example, Nicole stated, "I'm a very dedicated person, so if I say I'm going to do something, I usually do it." While Sofia recalled, "it's hard, keeping up with school and everything. But I'm trying my best." Later Sofia stated, "I'm trying. And I feel like that in itself—the fact that I can push myself to this point—is a success." Sofia recognized her own persistence. Perhaps it is Liliana's candid narration of her dogged persistence to succeed in high school when she first arrived in Canada that is truly an outstanding demonstration of educational persistence. She recounted matter-of-factly:

My experience was a lot about doing work on my own. Like going home, translating, trying to understand what we were doing in class. Then doing homework in English. I relied a lot on dictionaries. And different books. If you compared my experience to other students, I think I was reliant more on outside resources, like outside from the school. And it was a lot of, doing it on my own. Like, I didn't have anyone to ask, because my parents didn't speak English.... It was a lot of, doing work by myself, and kind of, pushing myself to understand what I was doing.... I rarely talked. I rarely talked, for the first 6 months I think. I copied everything that the teachers would put up on the board, and then go home and translate it.

Following her arrival in Canada with no English fluency prior to her start in grade 9, Liliana finished high school in four years with no ESL support. Liliana's efforts exemplified persistence, motivation, and belief in education.

While Liliana's academic experiences challenged her persistence, several participants found that their life experiences demanded persistence so that they could participate in education. For example, Luisa demonstrated persistence when health issues forced her to withdraw from school, and she pursued independent study to catch up. Luisa reflected:

I think “that” adversity made me more, resilient I guess, towards experiences that I might have later on. Because I think “that” was a very difficult experience for me. So, when challenges come up now, they’re hard. But I got through “that”, so these don’t seem as big of challenges.

Luisa recognized that her hardships, which she referred to as “that”, stimulated her persistence. Although Luisa graduated with her high school cohort, her academic progress lagged again when her son was born early in her university studies. Luisa summarized her persistence, “I’m more independent. Obviously, things will influence me, and things will push me. But I don’t feel I need to be pushed by somebody. Because I’m doing it for me.” Through difficult life experiences, Luisa developed resilience and persistence to push through academic challenges.

Perhaps Elena’s deliberations about quitting her studies provide insight into the toll of holding on and pushing through. She evoked vivid images of persistence when she recounted:

I was just like, “I just want to get out”. There’s a point when I’m kind of tired. And I was like, “I can’t. I could try now, but I don’t want to. I just want to leave. I want to go home.” .... I feel like that’s one of the hardest things I’ve ever had to accomplish. Ever. In my education. Was falling down so many times. Like I don’t call them failures, I call them learning experiences. I know so many times where I was like, “I just want to give up, I can’t do this.” But, I always found the strength to just get back up. And find another way. Or find another solution instead.

Despite challenges that drove her to the edge of quitting university, Elena looked back on these challenging situations as learning experiences through which her persistence shone. Elena, like all the participants, discussed her persistence in the context of her Canadian schooling experiences, which participants collectively characterized as “hard”. Participants pushed through the challenges and barriers they faced in education. They persisted despite academic difficulties, institutional marginalization, life challenges, and even despite the desire to abandon their studies.



## 6.5 Summary

These are but a small selection of participants' experiences that illustrate their persistence. For several participants, achievement and failure were effective motivators of educational persistence, to overcome challenges and to educationally persist. While grades were often markers of achievement, failure came in multiple forms and produced complex consequences. Throughout, participants' parents influenced many aspects of educational persistence. In particular, parents' experiences and hardships inspired *recompensa*, whereby participants sought to ensure that their own achievements acknowledged parents' sacrifices. When they themselves experienced hardships, participants pushed through, to achieve their educational and career goals. Participants had high expectations about their education, as did many of their parents. They believed that education fulfilled those expectations. In the final chapter that follows, study findings are summarized and synthesized, and conclusions about the value of this study and suggestions for future research are provided.

## Chapter 7: Educational Persistence: “Everything that happens, has a light at the end of the tunnel” (Elena)

Shoot for the stars! Don't let people tell you that because you're Latina, you can't do something. If you set your mind to it, you could do it. It's all on you, because sometimes people will put you down, but you just have to learn how to get over that negativity, and keep going. Because there are some people that will tell you that you can't. But that just gives you more power to prove them wrong. Just keep at it, never give up. Once you do, you give up on yourself. (Elena)

The preceding chapters have illustrated challenges such as Elena's, which frustrated her educational persistence. And yet, with such challenges, she persisted. Elena persisted despite challenges to her racial and ethnic identity and to her academic ability. She advocates for persistence, to push through, even with the hardships, and to “shoot for the stars!”

### 7.1 Introduction

The purposes of this exploratory case study were threefold. The first was to learn about the Canadian education experiences of Canadian, female post-secondary students of Latin American origins like Elena. This learning contributes to the growing body of research about Canadian education experiences of students from immigrant families, and specifically those of female Latin American students. The second purpose was to gain understanding about participants' educational persistence despite adversity. This knowledge contributes a strengths-oriented narrative about female Latin American students and challenges deficit narratives about Latin American students. The third purpose was to successfully engage the Multilevel Model of Intersectionality (MMI) (Núñez, 2014a, 2014b) to guide research processes, the analysis of which contributes to the ongoing development of intersectionality research practices. This final chapter provides conclusions and recommendations that emerged from the research findings. Consideration of the Multilevel Model of Intersectionality addresses the contributions of engagement with the Model and the limitations that resulted from that engagement.

Discussion of research limitations and suggestions for future research conclude this study.

## 7.2 Summary of Findings

This study produced an abundance of data about female Latin American participants and their experiences in the Canadian education system. The following three themes emerged from the data: negotiated identities, academic progress in the context of privilege and marginalization, and the importance of family. Participants found it necessary to negotiate their complex identities to bypass institutional and peer-imposed barriers at the intersections of racism and classism. Identity negotiation resulted in dynamic issues of acceptance and/or rejection of their own ethnic identities and others' identities. Furthermore, identity negotiation facilitated educational persistence for some participants. Participants indicated that their ethnic identities evolved from these processes.

Participants perceived that those with class and racial privilege accessed the most beneficial academic opportunities and performed better academically than those students such as themselves, who did not have racial and class privilege. Furthermore, participants identified that they and their families were marginalized within educational contexts, marginalized at the intersections of race and ethnicity. Importantly, despite the challenges, participants persisted; they believed in the promise of education. Participants expected that the opportunities offered through their educational attainment would enable them to improve their own and their families' situations, even with marginalization and their limited cultural capital for navigating the education system.

Findings suggest that participants' relationships with their parents influenced their educational attitudes and efforts. Participants sought out and relied upon their parents' support, involvement, and encouragement, which influenced participants' self-perceptions and self-expectations, and their academic motivations and persistence. Likewise, most participants' parents actively sought to support their daughters' education, and therefore influenced participants' educational goals, experiences, persistence, and results. Familism, which involves the prioritization of the family's

cultural values and economic needs (Espinoza, 2010; Hernández, 2015; Ovink, 2016; Sy & Romero, 2008), was an important factor for participants. Additionally, for most participants, *recompensa* (acknowledgement or reward) of parents' sacrifices motivated participants' academic efforts. However, not all participants had consistent, supportive parental influences on their educational efforts. For example, for those whose families experienced poverty, including Benita, Rosa, and Sofia, their parents were less likely to actively influence their daughters' educational persistence. Alternatively, some participants whose families experienced poverty did not necessarily have limited support from parents. Ultimately, participants with limited educational support from parents navigated their educational journeys and developed their own persistence. Throughout the myriad of life and educational challenges that participants experienced, they demonstrated academic persistence, which stemmed from their beliefs in the promise of education. They and most of their families valued education, and participants believed that their education would effect change for themselves and their families.

### 7.3 The Multilevel Model of Intersectionality

The Multilevel Model of Intersectionality (Núñez, 2014a, 2014b) was essential to this study, and the Model was fully integrated into the study practices. The introduction to the Model in Chapter 1 specifically referenced its application to the study, while the Chapter 2 review of literature is organized according to the Model's Domains of Power. The Model was particularly significant to data analysis. In Chapter 3, detailed reflexive recall of data analysis processes provides insight into the advantages and difficulties associated with engaging the Model. Finally, the MMI informed organization of the findings and analyses in Chapters 4 through 6. The discussion of the MMI here includes a summary of the effectiveness of engaging the model for data analysis, which produced extensive data that incorporated nuances about power and identity, and a summary of the difficulties encountered with the MMI analysis practices, including the associated research gaps.

Iterative, complex data analysis processes with the MMI resulted in extensive, complex data. Intracategorical intersectional, within-category analysis (McCall, 2005) facilitated by the Model revealed the heterogeneity of participants' gender, ethnic, racial, and class identities, and the nuances of their identities and their identity negotiations. The

variability evident in participants' identity signifies the variability of Latin American peoples in the North American context (Alcoff, 2005; Armony, 2014). Núñez (2014a) argues against "viewing Latinos as a monolithic group... [which] perpetuates misunderstanding and stereotyping about the multidimensionality of their existence" (p. 56-57). Instead of identifying participants' class identity for example, data analysis located participants' multiple class identities that coincided with family immigration trajectories. The iterative, complex data analysis processes with the Model enabled the nuances of this data to surface. Indeed, the Model enabled analysis of participants' experiences in the context of educational power relationships, through the lens of Organizational, Intersubjective, Representative, and Experiential Domains of Power. Such processes revealed aspects of participants' educational persistence including the significance and complexity of parental involvement with daughters' education. The Model demands analysis across levels, between Social Identities and Domains of Power, which was a significant priority for engaging the MMI in this study.

Additionally, the processes of applying the MMI to the research project facilitated my understanding of the nuances of intersectionality, and particularly of the intersections between identity and power relationships. I more fully understand the intersectionality of identity, whereby identity is dynamic and heterogeneous, and different aspects of identity intersect according to contextual situations. Furthermore, the Model enabled me to delve beyond identities, to analyse power relationships. For example, the Model enabled me to discover identities that participants engaged to facilitate assimilation or resist marginalization. My efforts with the MMI multi-stage analysis helped me to learn about and understand intersectional research processes. Finally, incorporation of the Model across the research project has reaffirmed my understanding and appreciation of intersectionality and the impact that intersectionality contributes to research and knowledge development. Thus, my engagement with the MMI challenged me with an iterative yet rewarding process of analysis that has affected my knowledge, understandings, abilities, and beliefs in the value of intersectionality research and of the Multilevel Model of Intersectionality.

Employing the MMI also created complications for the research processes. The study produced extensive quality data, although the volume of data was a challenge to analyse. Initially, the data was unwieldy and unmanageable in the sense that it was difficult to organize, determine themes, and define intersections. Moreover, this complex data required iterative processes that were sometimes tedious and frustrating, and required patience and persistence. The extensive data required multiple returns to the literature to review the accuracy of interpretations of the Model, the MMI levels, and particularly the Domains of Power. For example, some of the terminology was ambiguous; consider that the Organizational Domain includes social institutions, not only organizations, thus, term ambiguity complicated effective analysis processes. Consequently, participants' own words were employed in this text to facilitate reader understanding about data and its complexity.

Despite the extensive and diverse data produced in this study, there are gaps in the data; all levels and aspects of the MMI are not effectively and consistently indicated through the data. Although the study itself, along with the Research Questions and the Interview Guide, were developed in accordance with the MMI, reflection reveals that some aspects of the model were not well represented in the data collection methods. For example, there are gaps in the data about participants' gender identities. Additionally, the Model's tertiary level, Historicity, is not well established in the data and consequently raises more questions about participants' experiences in the context of Historicity. Another gap connected to the limitations of the Historicity level occurs as a result of focusing on individual experiences—individual issues and individual consequences of systemic oppression, instead of focusing on structural and systemic issues—which results in limited data about contextual and structural issues. Admittedly, Núñez (2014a) found that few intersectional studies include data that addresses all three levels of the Model. Perhaps research processes would be more effective if the Model's Historicity level was more clearly developed and defined. Consider the structure of the Domains of Power level, which clearly articulates the different Domains and the permeability between the Domains. Similar specific detail in the description of Historicity would benefit understanding of Historicity and would aid in analysis processes.

Additionally, the data omissions suggest that while interview practices secured extensive data about participants' perspectives, the data gap could have been addressed by alternative research methods. For example, additional or alternative research methods including observation, or interviews with different actors may improve effectiveness in securing data across the MMI. Consider the context of limited findings about participants' gender identity and sexism. Different methods such as participant observations might reveal further depth about such issues. The challenge of securing data about gender are discussed in more detail in section 7.5 Research Limitations. Note, the compatibility of intersectionality and the MMI with exploratory case study methodology is addressed in section 7.5 Research Limitations.

The Multilevel Model of Intersectionality is one iteration of intersectionality models designed to represent complex and dynamic identities and power relationships (Alemán, 2018; Dhamoon, 2011; Núñez, 2014a, 2014b). Indeed, although scholars identify the effectiveness of intersectionality research with Latin American students (Alemán, 2018; Núñez, 2014b; Valdivia, 2010), Núñez (2014a) herself identifies the MMI as an "ideal". Furthermore, in her recent review of intersectionality research that analyses the educational trajectories of Latin American youth, Alemán (2018) refers to the MMI when she reports, "as of this review, no scholar had adopted this model for his or her research" (p. 197). Evidently, this study's engagement of the Multilevel Model of Intersectionality is significant since the Model has had limited exposure to research processes. Therefore, future applications of the MMI to research may facilitate iterative development of the Model.

Although the Model effectively produced extensive, complex, and detailed data about the nuances of identity and power relationships, there were gaps in the data, and limited contextual data was the most significant data gap. Moreover, there was considerable difficulty in applying the Model to data analysis processes. These gaps and challenges resulted in re-examination of the compatibility between the research methodology and methods, with the MMI, and this relationship is addressed in section 7.5 Research Limitations.

## 7.4 Research Contributions

This study contributes to several areas of research scholarship. First, this study strengthens and diversifies the expanding body of research about the Canadian educational experiences of immigrants and their families, and specifically, about the experiences of female students of Latin American origins. The knowledge produced in this study informs systemic efforts to ensure that the educational needs of diverse students are addressed in Canadian schools. Additionally, this study contributes a Canadian perspective to a field of research dominated by U.S. research. Second, this study contributes knowledge about the educational persistence of female Latin American students. Knowledge of participants' persistence contributes to strengths-oriented narratives, and subsequently challenges deficit narratives about Latin American students. Consider that all participants persisted, despite experiencing challenges that included one or a combination of teachers' low expectations, limited familial support, racialized school settings, and financial needs. Third, since intersectionality continues to evolve (Dhamoon, 2011), and intersectional practices are underdeveloped (Alemán, 2018; Dhamoon, 2011), this study contributes to the further development of intersectionality research. Engagement with the MMI is discussed in detail, which contributes insight into the development of intersectionality research practices, and specifically about employing the Model, which informs future use of the MMI and could expand intersectional research practices (Alemán, 2018).

## 7.5 Research Limitations

Study limitations relate to the MMI in the context of case study methodology. Although the Model enhanced understanding of intersectionality and of the nuances of identity and power relationships, data analysis with the Model was difficult. While data analysis produced extensive data, there were also gaps in the data. These limitations are partially attributable to the research design, which combined case study with the MMI.

This study sought to examine participants' perspectives, understandings, and experiences with issues of identity such as race, ethnicity, class, and gender, in the context of their educational persistence. One well-established concern of intersectionality scholars is



which social identities to include/exclude in intersectionality research (Bilge, 2013; Cho et al., 2013; Knapp, 2005; Rollock, Gilborn, Vincent, & Ball, 2015 for example).

However, Yuval-Davis (2006) argues that intersectionality addresses identities that are relevant to the research and research participants. Consider that in their study of Black, middle-class parents in the context of education, Rollock, et al., (2015) incorporate gender into their analysis, where gender is relevant.

In this study of female Latin American students of diverse class identities, participants' identity priorities established identities for data analysis. When asked how they identified themselves, study participants introduced themselves with their ethnic identities, which is addressed in Chapter 4. Participants prioritized issues of ethnicity, racialization, and classism, while their discussions of gender identity were limited. Furthermore, participants' responses to probes for more information about gender identities were limited to their experiences of sexist dating experiences and patriarchal familial relationships. Therefore, intersectional analysis is limited to participants' perspectives about their identities. This limitation of gender identity is a gap in the findings. However, it is not my contention that intersectionality research must address different identity aspects equally. Nonetheless, this gap is a limitation since a greater understanding of gender identity issues would have enhanced research findings. This limitation leaves space for future research to explore gender identity issues in the context of female Latin American students' Canadian education.

For the study participants, their ethnicity as Latin Americans provides the entry point into this study, in part because the participants prioritized their ethnicity over other social identities. Rollock, et al. (2015) maintain that intersectionality establishes multiple entry points into research, which challenges scholars to determine research entry points. For example, race and class are entry points into their study, yet Rollock, et al. (2015) found the two entry points in their study challenged their analysis processes. Consider that this current study has four potential identity entry points, race, ethnicity, gender, and class.

Moreover, engagement of the MMI produced the potential for five more entry points—Historicity and the four Domains of Power—creating nine possible entry points. The Model’s nine entry points and data for 15 participants, established considerable complexity in the study, and challenged data management, data analysis, and even data presentation. That data complexity is likely linked to another limitation of the study; the extensive, complex data contributed to the underestimation of the significance of participants’ parents to participants’ education experiences. As discussed previously in Chapter 3, iterative data analysis with the MMI helped to unearth the layers of data about power relationships between participants and their parents. Future research would further examine the role of family in female Latin American students’ educational experiences. Evidently, while the Model facilitates complex data analysis, this complexity also inhibits data interpretation.

Finally, the research design, specifically the case study methodology, in conjunction with intersectionality and the MMI, limits the transferability of findings. Case study examines a unique situation in depth (Flyvbjerg, 2011; Gomm, Hammersley, & Foster, 2000; Merriam, 2009; Simons, 2009), which contributes to understanding of how participants interpret their lives (Simons, 2009). As discussed in Chapter 3, case study findings cannot be generalized (Flyvbjerg, 2011) as representative (Simons, 2009, Stake, 1995) of female Latin American students or of Latin American peoples in Canada. Case study data collection or analysis methods are not predetermined (Merriam, 2009). Similarly, scholars have challenged intersectionality because of the ambiguity of intersectionality methodology and methods (Hancock, 2007a; McCall, 2005; Nash, 2008). Yet it is these same ambiguities which enable intersectionality to be engaged in complex examinations of identities and power relationships (Anthias, 2013a; Hancock, 2007a; Hill Collins, 2000; McCall, 2005; Tomlinson, 2013). Perhaps case study ambiguities also facilitate meaningful engagement of case study methodology.

Ambiguity allows for research creativity, yet in this study, too much creativity resulted in too little generalizability. Context is vitally important to case study research; context introduces meaning and complexity to a case (Flyvbjerg, 2011; Merriam, 2009; Simons, 2009; Verschuren, 2003; Yin, 2012), and it is context that facilitates transferability. As

Lincoln and Guba (1985) explain, “it is entirely reasonable to expect an inquirer to provide sufficient information about the context in which an inquiry is carried out so that anyone else interested in transferability has a base of information appropriate to the judgement” (p. 124-125). Although this study resulted in data complexity, as discussed earlier in this chapter the tertiary level of the Model, Historicity, which is the level of contextual data, is less robust than a case study requires. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), limited contextual data restricts the transferability of this study, and the generalizability of the findings. Future research might not combine case study with the MMI. Instead, application of the Model to critical ethnography (Creswell, 2013), along with engagement of fewer participants, might produce the contextual depth that is missing here. Critical ethnography would allow for greater breadth in data collection methods, such as observations, and interviews with participants’ parents. Additionally, critical ethnography would alleviate some of the challenges found in engaging the Model.

This study delivers considerable insight into the dynamic intersections of the female Latin American participants’ identities and the complex nuances of power relationships that these participants experienced in the context of their education. However, data volume and complexity contributed to the challenges of intersectional data analysis. Furthermore, although this exploratory case study research benefitted from intersectionality and the MMI, and despite the extensive data, research methodology created limitations in the contextual data and findings, which challenges the generalizability of the findings. Research limitations provide directions for future research that would produce more consistent depth in research findings, particularly contextual data.

## 7.6 Recommendations: Educational Practices

These recommendations address educational practices that affect female Latin American students’ individual development, family engagement, and institutional improvement, and are formulated in response to the study findings about participants’ educational experiences as presented in Chapters 4, 5, and 6.

Implement education practices that enable Latin American family engagement with the education system when children are young, which will establish norms of family inclusion within the system. As study findings suggest, Latin American parents play a significant role in their daughters' education, however, participants indicated that they and their parents found themselves marginalized and even invisible in educational contexts. When familial relationships are valued within the education system, Latin American daughters' educational achievements benefit (Gloria & Castellanos, 2012; Gonzales, 2012). Practices that incorporate parents and familial relationships into school processes benefit students and families (Pushor, 2007). For example, the Funds of Knowledge approach to family/school relationships recognizes and values family knowledge, and engages families through that knowledge (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). The Funds of Knowledge approach also builds trusting relationships between home and school, and it challenges deficit perspectives of students and their families (Subero, Vila, & Esteban-Guitart, 2015). Educational practices can be implemented that acknowledge the importance of Latin American students' families, recognize the value families place on education, and engage families in formal education processes.

Implement education practices that ensure Latin American students are accepted and included rather than marginalized and segregated at school. Participants identified needs and issues of understanding, acceptance, and inclusion such as the following:

- Strengths-based assumptions form the narrative about Latin American students, and specifically female Latin American students.
- Community-building practices promote the inclusion of all identities and prevent student isolation.
- Students' abilities rather than their identities determine academic program placement.
- All educators take responsibility for English language learners, not only those educators who are mandated with the responsibility.
- Inclusive practices are system-wide and are found in educational aspects such as the curricula.

- Students' experiences with racialization and marginalization by peers and teachers are acknowledged and addressed within the school community.
- Educators recognize, acknowledge, and seek to alleviate the challenges of negotiating and persisting in, the education system, at the intersections of racial, ethnic, gender, and class identities.
- Diversity and inclusion practices extend beyond holidays and heroes, or food and festivals, to incorporate student diversity within school culture and to value students' origins, families, and perspectives.
- Students and families are supported in their development of system navigation knowledge, skills, and abilities. Effective system navigation would build on participants' educational strengths and would facilitate their academic achievement (Gibson & Hidalgo, 2009; McWhirter, et al., 2013; Taylor & Fernandez-Bergersen, 2015).

Across the Canadian education system, education institutions, jurisdictions, and communities have identified policies and practices—such as the goals identified in the recent *Ontario's Education Equity Action Plan* (Ontario, 2017)—designed to address the educational challenges such as those that participants identified, including the low expectations educators held of them. Furthermore, it is important to recognize that there are systemic challenges to these recommendations, and particularly economic constraints. Nevertheless, it is evident from the study findings that issues of educational marginalization, exclusion, and racialization existed for these participants. Therefore, there is room for improvement. These recommendations are derived from the study's findings about participants' educational experiences and needs. Moreover, the recommendations address the three themes that emerged from the study data: negotiated identities, academic progress in the context of privilege and marginalization, and the importance of family.

## 7.7 Suggestions: Future Research

This exploratory study provides multiple avenues for future research, research about female Latin American students, their educational persistence, and also research that engages the MMI. There is a need for research about the educational experiences of female Latin American students who do well academically (Gándara 2013; Valdivia, 2010), and even more so in the Canadian context. Future research could seek expanding insight into the educational persistence of high-achieving Latin American students, continue to challenge dominant discourses about Latin American students, and replace the focus on underachievement, achievement gaps, and disadvantages with persistence, consistent achievement, and successes.

One assumption embedded in this study is that educational persistence ensures PSE attendance. However, PSE is a societal measure of achievement which overlooks persistent, female Latin American students who do not reach PSE opportunities. Future research could consider the educational persistence and experiences of female Latin American students who do not attend PSE. Questions about their education could include, *How do they persist within the education system?*, *When do they leave the education system, and why?*, and *How do they measure success, and what measures of success do they achieve?* Future studies that prioritize female Latin American students and their education would contribute to deeper understanding of their educational needs and would facilitate the development of practices to enhance the education experiences of female Latin American students.

Parents occupy a significant position in the educational experiences of the study participants and in the findings of this study. Participants clearly indicated the importance of *recompensa* to their educational persistence. While research has interpreted this concept as family obligation (Perreira et al., 2010) or family representation (Venzant Chambers et al., 2015), participants such as Elena, Stella, and Urracá illustrated that although *recompensa* may include such aspects, the concept of *recompensa* is more complex. Therefore, understanding *recompensa* as it relates to students' motivation would be an interesting purpose for future research. Future research could build on findings from this study to explore the different dimensions of parents' influence and

support of Latin American students' education within the Canadian context. For example, consider how parents' voices would extend this study. Parents could provide insight into their support of their daughters' educational aspirations and efforts, and into their experiences with the Canadian education system. Furthermore, future research could explore parents' perspectives about familism and its impact on education, and also the concept of *recompensa*, both of which were introduced here. It is important to garner insight about parent/daughter relationships and family interactions with the education system. Additionally, one unexplored aspect of this study is that of family relationships.

This study demonstrates the significant advantages and limitations of intersectionality research, and research with the Multilevel Model of Intersectionality. Future intersectionality research could reproduce the advantages, including the production of complex intersectional data, and minimize the limitations, including gaps in contextual data, associated with the MMI. Future research could engage the Model in conjunction with other research methods, and/or processes (Dhamoon, 2011; Núñez, 2014a).

Furthermore, much of the intersectional research about Latin American students has yielded interview data (Alemán, 2018). This finding in conjunction with the limitations found in this study, indicate the need for research involving other methods, which could include critical ethnographic observations. Future research would provide further insight with specific focus on nuanced, intercategorical aspects of identity such as nationality, race, or gender. For example, as evidenced by the previous discussion about research limitations, one area for further research is gender identity of female Latin American students. Another possibility for future research involves intersectional analysis of identity in response to conflation of race and ethnicity. Researchers including Alcoff (2006) and Mora (2014) have examined Latin American racial and ethnic identity conflation in the U.S. context. The conflation of female Latin American racial and ethnic identity in the Canadian context would be an interesting focus for future research. Data collection methods could involve interviews with parents, in-class observations, and photovoice or participant journaling. Moreover, the MMI would be an adaptive and effective tool to apply to research with other communities of peoples.

Alternatively, these suggestions for future research have focused on the individual and the results of individuals' experiences of marginalization within systemic structures. Such knowledge will not leverage systemic change. Therefore, future research needs to access systemic knowledge about the marginalization of female Latin American students and their families from alternative perspectives and issues, such as institutional practices and systemic impacts of marginalization. Despite the pervasiveness of religion within Latin American cultures and that many of the study participants attended Catholic schools, this study did not consider the influences of religion on participants' educational persistence. Thus, future research could explore the systemic impact of religion on educational persistence. The findings here about institutional and systemic practices are limited, in part because of the limitations of the research design, as addressed previously in section 7.5 Research Limitations.

This exploratory case study introduces multiple opportunities for future research. Research about persistent female Latin American students in Canadian education would challenge the deficit construct of Latin American students in the U.S. context. Future research could expand understanding about the significant role of parents in female Latin American students' education. And future intersectionality research with the MMI would expand the opportunities of models such as the MMI in intersectionality research. As the section 7.5 Research Limitations identifies, the combination of intersectionality/MMI and case study methodology resulted in a gap in the contextual research. Therefore, future intersectionality research needs to accommodate that gap. One of the most significant concerns about case study research involves the generalizability of findings. This study does not alleviate that concern. Thus, to enhance generalizability, the Model could be applied to other methodologies, such as critical ethnographic study.

## 7.8 Last Words

As I write this final chapter and reflect upon my dissertation journey, I recognize that I kept tripping over my naïveté as a novice researcher. For example, when I first encountered the Multilevel Model of Intersectionality, I perceived the Model's applicability to intersectional research as superior to all other approaches. The Model satisfied my desire to address people's dynamic and complex identities, and their



experiences with power, according to the multiple entry points of intersectionality. I realize now that research is far more complex and, well, messy. Just as people are diverse, so too are the research approaches that capture, analyse, and contribute to understanding the myriad aspects of our natures and experiences. Now I recognize that my own future research could engage the Model differently. As Dhamoon (2011) argues in her discussion of intersectionality models, “a singular project or method is simply inadequate to address all of the complexities of a matrix of meaning making” (p. 239). My efforts to engage the MMI were rewarding and challenging, and the study limitations were disappointing, even though I realize that all research may produce limitations.

Evidently, this dissertation journey provided a significant opportunity for my personal growth and my growth as a researcher. There were times when I struggled to craft this text, and I was buoyed by the inspiring examples of persistence that participants demonstrated. I realized my own moments of *recompensa* motivation; participants’ contributions to the study compelled me to keep my commitment to produce a dissertation that acknowledges their educational efforts. Therefore, I too persisted. I leave the reader with Elena’s words and experiences, which are powerful examples of her strength, her determination, and her persistence. Would that all daughters have the opportunities, persistence, and belief in education that Elena retained at the conclusion of her undergraduate studies. She reflected:

No matter how much you fall, just always have a sense of getting back up there. Because if you fall and don’t get up, that’s a battle lost. It’s harder to get back up. I’ve been through it. But you see, everything that happens has a light at the end of the tunnel. Every obstacle, every experience, brings you that much closer to where you may have to end up at the end.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Latin American Identity

A survey of Canadian scholarship indicates the engagement of terms that include *Latin American* (Armony, 2014; Ginieniewicz & McKenzie, 2014), *Hispanic* (Merali, 2005), *Latino* (Bernhard, 2010) and *Latin@* (Guerrero, 2014). These terms produce boundaries and impose meaning; they confer or restrict acceptance, citizenship, and belonging (Anthias, 2012b; Gimenez, 2014). For example, Hispanic has signified working class, while Latino has middle class implications (Gimenez, 2014). Although now self-appropriated, Chicano originally denoted poor Mexican American labourers (Alcoff, 2005).

Terms and expressions are also manipulated to imply immigrants' level of commitment to the country of arrival (Alcoff, 2005; Anthias, 2012b; Rodriguez, 2008). For example, Rodriguez (2008) argues that in the U.S., Latino is synonymous with immigrant, which constructs Latin American peoples as non-assimilating outsiders. Additionally, the ravages of colonization, first by Spain and later by the U.S., are deeply embedded in these terms (Alcoff, 2005; Gracia, 2000). Politicization of Hispanic and Latino in the U.S. is evident, one used by Republicans and the other by Democrats, manipulated to imply philosophical and class differences (Alcoff, 2005). Consider also that a nationally institutionalized U.S. Hispanic identity was created through the efforts of activists, media, and bureaucrats (Mora, 2014). This process established an intentionally ambiguous, pan-ethnic construct with flexible boundaries that could absorb diverse national, racial, and ethnic identities while concurrently disregarding historical and geographical heterogeneity (Mora, 2014). Such enforced (Alcoff, 2006) political

opportunism disregards the diversities among Hispanics that are greater than their commonalities (Gimenez, 2014).

Armony (2014) argues that *Latino* and *Hispanic* are U.S. constructs that are not applicable to the Canadian sociohistorical context. Although there are some similarities between the Canadian and U.S. Latin American populations, in Canada there is a more recent Latin American history, with a more heterogeneous, and proportionally smaller population (Armony, 2014). Canadian contextual differences also include “policy and methodological approaches to ethnic diversity” (Armony, p. 21), and the concepts and social representation of race as well as generational differences (Ginieniewicz & McKenzie, 2014) unique to the Canadian context. Armony argues, “the two realities are so far apart that no parallels can be reasonably drawn regarding the Latino population in Canada and the United States” (p. 21). Ginieniewicz and McKenzie (2014) concur, yet also argue that the U.S. context can be informative. For example, *Latinx*, increasingly prevalent in academic scholarship (Logue, 2015), bypasses gender binarization of Latino/Latina, Latino/a, or Latin@, and establishes a gender-inclusive expression (Gómez-Barris & Fiol-Matta, 2014; Logue, 2015). *Latinx* is already gaining traction in Canada.

Although far more complex than I can do justice here, I have briefly introduced some of the central issues involved in terminology used to reflect the diverse peoples from Mexico, Central and South America, and the Caribbean. Ultimately, as Armony (2014) argues, “there is no Latin American core system of values that would survive intact the process of immigration and integration” (p. 29). Instead, Gimenez, (2014) maintains that the challenge does not lie with the terminology, rather, that collective terms create false

constructs that imply non-existent commonalities with monolithic set of values, ethnicities, and identities. For example, there is no collective racial or ethnic identity preserved by any one of these terms (Alcoff, 2005; Armony, 2014; Gimenez, 2014; Romero & Habell-Pallán, 2002). Thus, collective terms run the risk of implying homogeneity where none exists (Gracia, 2000).

## Appendix B: Interview Guide

Reminders for participants prior to starting the interview:

- Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may find that some of the interview questions may refer to sensitive topics. You have the right to skip answering any of the questions, without explanation.
- Please do not divulge identifying information about other people. This will protect them and ensure their identity and experiences are confidential.

Personal information (2-3)

- Tell me about yourself?
- How is school going?
- Tell me a bit about your family, your family's history?

Student Role (2-3)

- What are you like as a learner? What type of student are you?
- How do other people perceive you? (peers, teachers, classmates, friends)?
- What keeps you motivated to do well?
- What successes and challenges do you have in education?
- What strengths or strategies do you engage, to be successful?
- What do others expect of you as a student?

Allies (1)

- Who pressures/encourages you about your education?
- Who influences, or helps you to navigate the education system?
- What role do your parents play in your education? Peers?

Identity (2-3)

- What should others understand about you?
- What messages about your identity do/did you get at school?
- As a female Latin American, how do you see yourself? How do others see you?
- How do you identify yourself? Please explain.
- How do others perceive your identity?
- How has being part of an immigrant family influenced your education?
- How do education experiences influence your understanding of your own and others' identities?

Education experiences (4-5)

- Research has shown that Latin American kids don't do as well as other students in school – immigrants or Canadians. Why do you suppose that is?
- Many teens say they are judged in high school. How were you judged?



- What stereotypes/discriminations have you faced at school?
- Who is privileged at school?
- How do teachers treat Latin American girls at school?
- What are the successes and challenges of being a female Latin American student in Canada?
- How are your education experiences similar/different from other girls? Latin American girls?
- How does being Latin American influence your education experiences?

#### Final thoughts (1)

- What advice would you give girls who are like you, who want to do well in school?
- What recommendations would you give to teachers, about teaching Latin American girls?
- How should the education system change, so that it is better for female Latin American students?

#### Potential prompts

- What else happened?
- How does that make you feel?
- Can you tell me more?

## Appendix C: Recruitment Poster



# Latina, Eh?

**Are you a 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Latin American University or College student with 4 years or more in Canadian schools?**

Your experiences as a student are important to us!

Please join our study about how Latin American women persist in Canadian education.

If you are interested and agree, you will participate in:

- 1 or 2 face-to-face interviews (about 1 hour each)

In appreciation of your time, you will receive

- **\$20 VISA gift card** for each session

For more information or to volunteer for this study, please call, text, or email:


**Phillipa Myers**  
**Faculty of Education**

**XXX-XXX-XXXX**

**XXXXXXXXXX@XXXXXXXXXXXXXX**

Version Date: 30.11.2016

## Appendix D: Ethics Approval



# Western Research

Research Ethics

**Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board**  
**NMREB Delegated Initial Approval Notice**

**Principal Investigator:** Prof. Goli Rezai-Rashti  
**Department & Institution:** Education\Faculty of Education, Western University

**NMREB File Number:** 108699  
**Study Title:** Investigating the persistence of female Latin American students attending Canadian higher education: An intersectional analysis

**NMREB Initial Approval Date:** December 15, 2016  
**NMREB Expiry Date:** December 15, 2017

**Documents Approved and/or Received for Information:**

Document Name	Comments	Version Date
Western University Protocol		2016/11/30
Recruitment Items	Recruitment Poster	2016/11/30
Recruitment Items	Recruitment - Newspaper	2016/11/30
Recruitment Items	Recruitment Email	2016/10/18
Letter of Information & Consent		2016/11/30
Instruments	Interview Guide	2016/11/30

The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) has reviewed and approved the above named study, as of the NMREB Initial Approval Date noted above.

NMREB approval for this study remains valid until the NMREB Expiry Date noted above, conditional to timely submission and acceptance of NMREB Continuing Ethics Review.

The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario.

Members of the NMREB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB.

The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000941.

\_\_\_\_\_  
NMREB Chair or delegated board member

Ethics Officer: Erika Basile \_\_\_\_ Nicole Kaniki \_\_\_\_ Grace Kelly \_\_\_\_ Katelyn Harris \_\_\_\_ Vikki Tran ☒ Karen Gopaul \_\_\_\_

**Western University, Research, Support Services Bldg., Rm. 5150**  
London, ON, Canada N6G 1G9 t. 519.661.3036 f. 519.850.2466 [www.uwo.ca/research/ethics](http://www.uwo.ca/research/ethics)

## Appendix E: Letter of Information and Consent



### **Letter of Information**

**Project Title:** Investigating the persistence of female Latin American students attending Canadian higher education: An intersectional analysis

**Principal Investigator**

- Professor Goli Rezai-Rashti, Faculty of Education, Western University

**Researcher**

- Phillipa Myers, PhD Candidate, Faculty of Education, Western University

**Dear:**

**1. Invitation to Participate**

You are invited to participate in this research study about the Canadian education experiences of women of Latin American origin.

**2. Purpose**

This study purpose is to learn about how students of Latin American origin experience education in Canada, and in particular, how Latin American girls persist in Canadian schooling. This study is important because there is a growing Latin American population in Canada, yet there is very little understanding about how Latin American students experience Canadian schools. More importantly, there is little known about how Latin American young women experience Canadian education. The findings from this study will provide valuable insight about students' educational experiences and needs, which will help educators and policy makers ensure they maximize the educational potential and opportunities of all immigrant students in general and particularly Latin American female students.

### **3. Study Length**

This study will be conducted during the 2016/2017 academic year. You will take part in one or two interview sessions, with a total time commitment of 1-2 hours. Interview sessions will be scheduled according to your availability.

### **4. Study Procedures**

If you agree to participate, you will engage in an in-person conversational interview lasting approximately 1 hour, with the researcher. You may be invited to participate in a follow-up, in-person interview lasting approximately one hour, at a later time.

All interviews will take place on campus at a mutually agreed time and location. All sessions will be audio recorded. If you do not wish to be audio recorded, you may not participate in this study.

### **5. Possible Risks and Harms**

There are no known or anticipated risks or discomforts associated with participating in this study. However, you may find that some of the questions may refer to sensitive topics that may make you feel uncomfortable. You have the right to decline to answer any of the questions, without explanation. Furthermore, if at any time during the study you wish to withdraw for whatever reason, your decision will be fully respected and supported.

### **6. Possible Benefits**

There are no known or anticipated direct benefits to you from participating in this study, however, it is hoped that this experience will be rewarding to you as you reflect on and share your unique knowledge and experiences for this study. Additionally, the information you share will provide valuable insight for educators and policy makers, who wish to improve the education opportunities for immigrant students in general and in particular Latin American girls.

### **7. Study Withdrawal**

You are under no obligation to participate in this study. If you do decide to participate, you are welcome to withdraw at any time for any reason. If you decide to withdraw from the study, please let us know. The information that was collected until you leave will still be used, and no new information will be collected without your permission. You also have the right to request that the information collected about you is removed from the study. If you wish to have your information removed, please let the researcher know, and all information provided by you will be removed.

## **8. Confidentiality**

We do our best to protect your identity and privacy, and keep your personal, identifying information confidential. All personal information collected during the study will be kept confidential and accessible only to the researchers of this study. It will not be shared with anyone outside of the study unless required by law, then we have a duty to comply. Additionally, representatives of the University of Western Ontario Non-Medical Research Ethics Board may require access to your study-related records to monitor the conduct of the research. If the results of the study are published, your name will not be used. Publications about this research may include direct quotes from you, but your name will not be used.

The researchers will keep any personal information about you in a secure and confidential location for a minimum of five years. Digital information is stored on Western University's secure servers and password protected. It will be destroyed with data-deletion software after five years. Paper-based information will be kept securely in a locked filing cabinet in a locked office and will be securely destroyed using industry-standard shredders.

## **9. Compensation**

To respect your time and show appreciation for you sharing your experiences with us, you will receive a \$20 VISA gift card for each interview session that you attend. If you withdraw from this study during a session, you will still receive the gift card for the session you are in. You will not receive the \$20 VISA gift card for sessions not attended. Additionally, should you incur travel or child care expenses in order to participate in this study, these will be reimbursed.

## **10. Participants' Rights**

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may decide not to be in this study, at any time. Even if you consent to participate you have the right to not answer individual questions or to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose not to participate or to leave the study at any time it will have no effect on your standing as a student. Additionally, we will give you new information that is learned during the study that might affect your decision to stay in the study. Furthermore, you do not waive any legal rights by signing this consent form.

Finally, you are welcome to receive a summary of the study and/or study results as well as any and all reports that are the result of this study. Please discuss this with the researcher, who will arrange this with you.

### **11. The Researchers' Commitment**

The researchers are committed to you and will do the following:

- Provide information to you about the research study and processes
- Follow all ethical standards and protocols designed to protect participants, according to the policies and procedures as established by the *Tri-Council Policy Statement for Ethical Conduct* and Western University's Office of Research Ethics and Research Ethics Board.
- Review consent at the beginning of each interview session.

### **12. Questions or Concerns**

If you have questions or concerns about this research study, please contact the following:

- Phillipa Myers, Researcher: xxxxxxxxxxxx@xxxxxxxxxx or xxx-xxx-xxxx
- Professor Goli Rezai-Rashti, Principal Investigator:  
xxxxxxxxxx@xxxxxxxxxx

If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may also contact Western University's Office of Research Ethics xxxxxxxxxxxx@xxxxxxxxxx or xxx-xxx-xxxx.

I look forward to working with you on this research project.

Most sincerely,

Phillipa Myers

**This letter is yours to keep for future reference.**

## **Consent Form**

**Project Title:** Investigating the persistence of female Latin American students attending Canadian higher education: An intersectional analysis

**Principal Investigator**

- Professor Goli Rezai-Rashti, Faculty of Education, Western University

**Researcher**

- Phillipa Myers, PhD Candidate, Faculty of Education, Western University

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me, and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

☐ YES ☐ NO

I consent to the use of unidentified quotes obtained during the study in the dissemination of this research

☐ YES ☐ NO

Name of Participant (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Person Obtaining Informed Consent (please print)     Phillipa Myers

Signature of Researcher \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



# Curriculum Vitae

## Phillipa Myers

### EDUCATION

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- Ph.D.**      **Education–Equity Studies in Education**  
*Western University, London, Ontario*  
**Dissertation:** *The educational persistence of female Latin American students in Ontario’s education system: An intersectional analysis*  
 Advisor: Dr. Goli Rezai-Rashti
- M.P.S.**      **Multicultural Education**  
*State University of New York at New Paltz, New York, USA*  
**Thesis:** *Who do you belong to? Issues of racism, identity, and diversity in education*
- B. Ed.**      **Advanced Bachelor of Education**  
*Nipissing University, Nipissing, Ontario*
- B. Ed.**      **Junior/Intermediate Education**  
 Concurrent Program  
*York University, Toronto, Ontario*
- B. A.**      **Honours, Physical & Health Education/History**  
*York University, Toronto, Ontario*

### ADDITIONAL CERTIFICATIONS

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**Western University Certificate in University Teaching and Learning**

**Ontario Teaching Certification**

#### **Additional Teaching Qualifications**

- Special Education, Learning Disabilities Part I
- Co-operative Education Part I
- Guidance Specialist
- Guidance Part II
- Guidance Part I
- Senior Division–Individual and Society

## AWARDS & HONOURS

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### **Doctoral Excellence Research Award**

Western University

### **Joseph-Armand Bombardier Canada Graduate Scholarship–Doctoral Award**

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)

### **Western Graduate Research Scholarship (WGRS)**

Western University

### **Achievement in Service Award – New Jersey**

New Jersey Association of 4-H Agents

### **Rutgers Cooperative Extension Diversity Award**

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

### **Excellence in 4-H Programming**

Jersey Roots, Global Reach Climate Science, New Jersey Association of 4-H Agents

### **Excellence in 4-H Programming**

NJ 4-H Afterschool Training Program, New Jersey Association of 4-H Agents

### **Excellence in 4-H Programming**

4-H Summer Science Program, New Jersey Association of 4-H Agents

### **Outstanding Graduate**

Educational Studies Department, State University of New York at New Paltz

### **Curriculum Leadership–Mathematics**

York Region District School Board, ON

### **Curriculum Leadership–Health and Physical Education**

York Region District School Board, ON

### **Curriculum Leadership–Girls in Science and Technology**

York Region District School Board, ON

## EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

---

### **Teacher – Newcomer Orientation Program/Peer Leader Training**

Thames Valley District School Board, London, ON

**Teacher – Secondary Occasional**

Thames Valley District School Board, London, ON

**Instructor – Limited Duties**, Teacher Education, Faculty of Education

*Western University*, London, ON

**Professor – Sessional, Access Studies**, Faculty of Regional & Continuing Education

*Fanshawe College*, London, ON

**Teaching Assistant**, Teacher Education, Faculty of Education

*Western University*, London, ON

**Research Assistant**, Faculty of Education

*Western University*, London, ON

**Family Literacy Coordinator**, London's Child and Youth Network

*City of London/LUSO Community Services*, London, ON

**Department Head/Assistant Professor/County 4-H Agent**,

Rutgers Cooperative Extension – School of Environmental and Biological Sciences

*Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey*, NJ, USA

**Department Research Assistant**, Department of Educational Studies

*State University of New York at New Paltz*, New York, USA

**Program Coordinator**, Adult literacy program

*Literacy Volunteers of America*, Newburg, NY

**School Teacher/Guidance Counsellor**, Secondary

*York Region District School Board*, ON

## TEACHING EXPERIENCE

---

**B.Ed. – TEACHER EDUCATION TEACHING****Course Instructor – Pre-service Teacher Education**

- Teaching Grades 7 & 8, Healthy Living Education

**Teaching Assistantship – Preservice Teacher Education**

- Urban Schools – Professor G. Rezai-Rashti
- Urban Schools II – Professor W. Martino
- Urban Schools I – Professor G. Rezai-Rashti

## ADULT TEACHING & TRAINING

### Professor – Academic and Career Entrance (ACE) Program – Fanshawe College

- Education program that meets college admission requirements

### Trainer – Professional Educators – 4-H Afterschool Training Program

- Professional development to support quality afterschool education

### Supervisor – 4-H Educators and Volunteer Educators

- Provided guidance, coaching, and support to educators teaching 4-H education programs

## CHILDREN & YOUTH TEACHING

### Informal Teaching – 4-H Education Programs for Children and Youth

- Experiential, activity based, informal education programs
- STEM areas: climate change, gardening, engineering, electricity, astronomy
- Civic engagement, healthy living, life skills, family programs

### Formal Teaching – Ontario Public Schools

- Secondary, Occasional
- Secondary School Teacher/ Guidance Counsellor

## SCHOLARSHIP

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## PUBLICATIONS

### Book Chapter

**Myers, P.** (2018). Welcoming all voices: Building inclusive school-based parent groups. In A. Esmail, A. Pitre, D.E. Lund, H.P. Baptiste, & G. Duhon-Owens (Eds.). *Research studies on educating for diversity and social justice*. (pp. 73-90). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

### Refereed Publications

**Myers, P., Riveros, G., & Duggal, A.** (2018). Identities in Transition: Investigating the encounters of mothers of Colombian origin with Canadian schools. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 17(4). DOI: [10.1080/15348431.2018.1478297](https://doi.org/10.1080/15348431.2018.1478297).

**Myers, P.** (2011). Resource Review: Design It! and Explore It! *Journal of Youth Development–Bridging Research and Practice*, 6(1), [http://data.memberclicks.com/site/nae4a/JYDfinal\\_110601x.pdf](http://data.memberclicks.com/site/nae4a/JYDfinal_110601x.pdf).

**Myers, P.** (2011). Can I Breathe Yet? Reflections on My First Year in Cooperative Extension. *Journal of Extension*, 49, (1), <http://www.joe.org/joe/2011february/tt1.php>.

**Myers, P.** (2010). How Inclusive is Your 4-H Community? *News and Views*, National Association of Extension 4-H Agents Newsletter, online publication, 1:1. Reprinted in *KAE4-HA: The Prairie Professional*, Fall 2010.

## PRESENTATIONS

### Refereed Conference Presentations

**Myers, P.** (2019 accepted). *Belief in the Promise of Education: Latinas' Persistence in the Context of Canadian Education*. Paper presentation at the meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Toronto, ON.

**Myers, P.** (2019 accepted). *Organized Chaos or Prolific Iteration? Leveraging a Model of Intersectionality for Data Analysis*. Paper presentation at the meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Toronto, ON.

**Myers, P.** Riveros, G., & Duggal, A. (2019 accepted). *Immigration and the Transition between School Systems: Analysing the Experiences of a Group of Colombian Mothers with Canadian Schools*. Paper presentation at the meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Toronto, ON.

**Myers, P.** (2017). *Intersectionality: The future of feminist research*. Paper presented at the meeting of the Canadian Society for the Study of Education, Toronto, ON.

**Myers, P.** (2015). *Creating inclusive school communities: Parent leaders = Essential partners*. Paper presented at the meeting of the Canadian Society for the Study of Education, Ottawa, ON.

Riveros, G., **Myers, P.**, & Duggal, A. (2015). *Identities in transition: Latin American parents' encounters with Canadian schools*. Paper presented at the meeting of the Canadian Society for the Study of Education, Ottawa, ON.

**Myers, P.** (2015). *The experiences of Latin American students in Ontario schools: Foundations for Future Research*. Presentation at the 2015 Migration and Ethnic Relations Graduate Student Conference: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Migration and Settlement. Western University, London, ON.

Abbott, M., & **Myers, P.** (2014). *Welcoming All Voices – building inclusive parent groups in schools*. Workshop at the Ontario Healthy Schools Coalition – National Healthy Schools Conference, London, ON.

- Myers, P.** (2014). *In their own words: Latina youth experiences in Ontario schools*. Presentation at Canadian Society for the Study of Education Annual Conference, St. Catharines, ON.
- Taylor, E.M. & **Myers, P.** (2010). *Flash judgments: A snapshot of diversity*. Workshop at the National Association of Extension 4-H Agents Conference, Phoenix, AZ.
- Bovitz, L., Powell, V., & **Myers, P.** (2010). *Unleashing the possibilities with Latino 4-H clubs*. Workshop at the National Association of Extension 4-H Agents Conference, Phoenix, AZ.
- Myers, P.**, Cole, D., Kinsey, S., McDonnell, J., Powell, V., & Torretta, A. (2010). *4-H climate Science programming with urban youth*. Program Showcase at the National Association of Extension 4-H Agents Conference, Phoenix, AZ.
- Myers, P.**, Cole, D., Kinsey, S., McDonnell, J., Powell, V., & Torretta, A. (2010). *4-H Climate science programming with at-risk youth*. Program Showcase at the 2010 Children, Youth, and Families at Risk National Conference, San Francisco, CA.
- Myers, P.** (2010). *Together we're better*. Presentation at the National After-School Association Convention, Washington, D.C.
- Myers, P.** (2010). *Creating inclusive youth environments: Some practical tools*. Presentation at the 2010 Tri-State Diversity Conference, Hebron, KY.
- Myers, P.** (2009). *Creating inclusive youth environments*. Presentation at the New Jersey School-Age Care Coalition's 2009 Annual Afterschool Conference, Princeton, NJ.
- Myers, P.**, Lyons, R., Powell, V., & Devitt, A. (2009). *Sink or swim – How mentoring can be your life preserver*. Seminar at the 2009 National Association of Extension 4-H Agents Annual Conference, Rochester, NY.
- Myers, P.** & Ripberger, C. (2009). *Delivering 4-H SET programming for at-risk youth through collaborating with at-risk and after-school program providers*. Program Showcase at the Children, Youth and Families at Risk 2009 Conference, Baltimore, MD.
- Myers, P.** (2009). *Inclusion: Meeting the challenges of diversity head on*. Presentation at the National After-School Association Convention, New Orleans, LA.
- Ripberger, C., Kinsey, S., & **Myers, P.** (2009). *Engaging, simple and affordable after-school STEM projects*. Workshop at the National After-School Association Convention, New Orleans, LA.

**Myers, P.** (2009). *Addressing issues of diversity and inclusion in 4-H*. Presentation at the National 4-H Conference, Chevy Chase, MD.

#### **Non-Refereed Presentations**

**Myers, P.** (2017). *Invitational presentation*. Navigating the Challenges of Graduate School for Women. Western University, London, ON.

**Myers, P. & Du, X.** (2016). *Enhancing cross cultural sensitivity*. Invited for multiple workshops for the School of Human Services, Fanshawe College, London, ON.

Lacey, D. & **Myers, P.** (2015). *Federal Election 2015: A Guide to Voting*. Train-the-trainer workshop for immigrant women leaders, to take back to their communities. Collaborative community initiative with London & Middlesex Local Immigration Partnership and Networking for an Inclusive Community.

**Myers, P.** (2015). *Ethical considerations in doctoral research*. Invitational presentation for Ed. D. Educational Leadership Program. Faculty of Education, Western University. London, ON.

Enriquez-Johnson, A., Kelly-Delgado, K., Low, E., Milczarek, K., & **Myers, P.** (2015). *Enhancing cross cultural sensitivity*. Workshop for faculty, School of Human Services, Fanshawe College, London, ON.

Enriquez-Johnson, A., Kelly-Delgado, K., Low, E., & **Myers, P.** (2014). *Diversity conversations: Embracing diversity in your classrooms*. Workshop for pre-service teachers, Western University Faculty of Education, London, ON.

Abbott, M., Enriquez-Johnson, A., Low, E., & **Myers, P.** (2013). *Diversity conversations: Embracing diversity in your classrooms*. Workshop for pre-service teachers, Western University Faculty of Education, London, ON.

#### **Refereed Poster Presentations**

Riveros, G., **Myers, P.**, & Wei, W. (2019 accepted). *The Global Observatory of Leadership Standards: A Digital Resource for Researchers and Policy Makers*. Poster presentation at the meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Toronto, ON.

Riveros, G. & **Myers, P.** (2016). *Identity and belonging: Accounts of transition between school contexts as experienced by mothers of Colombian origin*. Poster presented at the meeting of Canadian Society for the Study of Education, Calgary, AB.

**Myers, P.** (2015). *How do students of Latin American origin experience Canadian schools?: More research, please!* Poster presented at the meeting of the Canadian Society for the Study of Education, Ottawa, ON.

Riveros, G., Duggal, A., & **Myers, P.** (2015). *Transitioning experiences and Latin American identities in Canadian schools: The voices of the parents*. Poster presented at the meeting of the Canadian Society for the Study of Education, Ottawa, ON.

**Myers, P.**, & Hussein, H. (2013). *Celebrating our successes: London & Middlesex Local Immigration Partnership (LMLIP)*. Poster presented at the Pathways to Prosperity 2013 National Conference, Ottawa, ON.

Kinsey, S. & **Myers, P.**, (2011). *AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps VISTA – Partners in Building High Quality Urban 4-H Programs in NJ*. Poster at the 2011 National Urban Extension Conference, Des Moines, IA.

Kinsey, S., **Myers, P.**, Cole, D., McDonnell, J., Powell, V., & Torretta, A. (2011). *4-H Jersey Roots, Global Reach – Teaching Urban Youth About Climate Science*. Poster at the 2011 National Urban Extension Conference, Des Moines, IA.

Ripberger, C., **Myers, P.**, Kinsey, S., DuBois, J., Pellien, T., & McDonnell, J. (2009). *Science Explorations and Engineering Design Challenges with Urban Youth through 4-H Afterschool: A Multi-County Approach*. Poster at the 2009 National Association of Extension 4-H Agents Annual Conference, Rochester, NY.

**Myers, P.** (2008). *A Win/Win Opportunity – 4-H Partnerships with Urban Summer Camps*. Poster, 2008 Rutgers Cooperative Extension Annual Conference, New Brunswick, NJ.

## GRANT FUNDED PROJECTS

Role	Grant	Purpose	Year	Funding
<b>Project Developer /Grant Writer</b>	<i>SPARKS! Neighbourhood Matching Fund City of London</i>	Beacock Reading Garden Establish reading garden at public library	2013	\$5,000
<b>Project Developer /Grant Writer</b>	<i>TD Friends of the Environment Foundation Grant</i>	Beacock Reading Garden Establish reading garden at public library	2013	\$2,508
<b>Co-Principal Investigator /Site Director</b>	<i>Children, Youth, and Families at Risk Sustainable Communities Grant, renewal</i>	Ninos Fuertes, Comunidas Mas Fuertes (Strong Kids, Stronger Communities)  Renewal of original grant With L. Bovitz & G. Powell	2011	\$140,000



<b>Role</b>	<b>Grant</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Funding</b>
<b>Principal Investigator</b>	<i>JCPenney FRC Team</i>	FIRST Robotics Team Extension on original grant	2010-2011	\$1,000
<b>Site Director</b>	<i>Children, Youth, and Families at Risk Sustainable Communities Grant, renewal</i>	Jersey Roots, Global Reach  Renewal of original grant With D. Cole, A. Tourette, G. Powell, S. Kinsey, & J. McDonnell	2010-2011	\$140,000
<b>Co-Principal Investigator /Site Director</b>	<i>Children, Youth, and Families at Risk Sustainable Communities</i>	Ninos Fuertes, Comunidas Mas Fuertes (Strong Kids, Stronger Communities) Positive Youth Development in Latino Urban Communities With L. Bovitz & G. Powell 5-year grant	2010-2011	\$100,000
<b>Principal Investigator</b>	<i>AmeriCorps* VISTA</i>	Provision for 5 AmeriCorps*VISTA members to serve youth in resource challenged communities in New Jersey. 3-year grant	2010-2011	\$102,326
<b>Principal Investigator</b>	<i>National 4-H Council/JCPenney Afterschool Fund FIRST Robotics Team</i>	Development of FIRST Robotics team in resource challenged community	2009-2010	\$10,000
<b>Site Director</b>	<i>Children, Youth, and Families at Risk Sustainable Communities</i>	Jersey Roots, Global Reach Climate change education program in at-risk communities With D. Cole, A. Tourette, G. Powell, S. Kinsey, & J. McDonnell 5-year grant	2009-2010	\$100,000
<b>Principal Investigator</b>	<i>National 4-H Council/MetLife Foundation 4-H Afterschool Training</i>	4-H Afterschool training program to support the professional development of afterschool educators 335 educators trained (8 hours)	2009	\$10,000

## OTHER SCHOLARLY PROJECTS

Schniedewind, N. & Sapon-Shevin, M. (2012). *Educational Courage: Resisting the Ambush of Public Education*. Research and editing support.

Taylor, L.S. & Whittaker, C.R. (2009). *Bridging Multiple Worlds: Case Studies of diverse Educational Communities, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*. Pearson, NY. Research and editing support.

Ontario Physical and Health Education Association. (2000). *Health and Physical Education Grades 1-8 Support Document*. Writing Team member.

York Region District School Board. (1999). *Teacher Advisor Program: Grades 7, 8, 9*.

## RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

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### PH.D. RESEARCH

- *The educational persistence of female Latin American students in Ontario's education system: An intersectional analysis*
- Produce exploratory, qualitative research study of semi-structured interviews with female Latin American PSE students – Ph.D. Thesis

### RESEARCH ASSISTANT

Dr. G. Rezai-Rashti, Professor, Critical Policy, Equity and Leadership Studies

- Support for multi-city, SSHRC-funded study

Dr. G. Riveros, Assistant Professor, Critical Policy, Equity and Leadership Studies

- Organize and populate website with current/relevant data  
<https://www.edu.uwo.ca/gols/>
- *Identities in Transition: Investigating the encounters of mothers of Colombian origin with Canadian schools*. P. Myers, G. Riveros, & A. Duggal
- *Identity and belonging: Accounts of transition between school contexts as experienced by mothers of Colombian origin*. Poster presented at the meeting of Canadian Society for the Study of Education, Calgary, AB. G. Riveros & P. Myers
- *Identities in transition: Latin American parents' encounters with Canadian schools*. Paper presented at the meeting of Canadian Society for the Study of Education, Ottawa, ON. G. Riveros, P. Myers, & A. Duggal
- *Demographic Data Search: Latin American Children, Youth, and Families in London Ontario*. Research briefing

Dr. P. Bishop, Associate Dean, Graduate Studies, Western University

- *Mentorship: A survey of current research* – research briefing produced

## **DEPARTMENT RESEARCH ASSISTANT**

Department of Educational Studies, School of Education

*State University of New York at New Paltz, New York, USA*

## **ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICE**

---

### **PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS & SERVICE**

Canadian Society for the Study of Education

- Annual Conference Workshop Reviewer

Canadian Association for the study of Women and Education (CASWE)

- Annual Conference Workshop Reviewer

National Association for Multicultural Education

- Annual Conference Workshop Reviewer

National Association of Extension 4-H Agents (NAE4-HA)

- Diversity Committee member
- Chair-Elect, Diversity Committee

New Jersey Association of 4-H Agents (NJA4-HA)

- Auditing Committee Member
- National Diversity Committee State Representative

### **COMMITTEE WORK**

#### **Department of 4-H Youth Development, Rutgers University**

- Science, Engineering, and Technology Committee
- Children, Youth, and Families At-Risk (CYFAR) Sustainable Communities Project Steering Committee
- Rutgers 4-H Summer Science Program, coordination team member
- Urban Programming Committee
- Leadership and Personal Development Committee
- North Jersey Teen Conference Planning Committee

### **Rutgers Cooperative Extension**

- Search Committee, Environmental and Resource Management Agents
- Search Committee Chair, Administrative Assistant, RCE of Essex/EFNEP/4-H

### **York Region District School Board—Administrative Leadership**

- Excellence in Mathematics Awards Committee—Regional committee
- York Region Secondary School Reform Implementation Committee
- Spotlight on Women in Science and Technology—Regional Initiative

### **York Region District School Board— Leadership of Students’ Extra-Curricular Activities**

- Advisor—*Character in Action* Student Committee, Student Government
- Advisor—Indoor Rock Climbing Team, Cheerleading Squad
- Organizer—Geography Challenge, Public Speaking, School Play, Student Travel

## **COMMUNITY SERVICE**

### **London & Middlesex Local Immigration Partnership (LMLIP)**

- Chair, *Education Sub-Council*
- *Supports for Parents Working Group*: Development and implementation of *Welcoming All Voices* workshop and resource document
- *Supports for School Staff Working Group*
  - *Ontario Pre-service Teacher Education: The Case for Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity Training*. Position paper sent to the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities seeking equity, inclusion and diversity training practice improvements to pre-service teacher training programs. Writing team member